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["COME, SEE HOW TAME BILLY IS WITH ME!" SAYS MOLLY, AS STUART COMES UP.]

## BITTER FOR SWEET

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

"The facts speak for themselves," says Professor Rygate.

"Then why do you waste breath over them?" retorts Molly, impudently, whilst the young man at the far end of the room laughs. "I hate facts almost as much as I hate 'ologies.' From morning to night, from beginning to end of the year we exist in their very midst. There is zoology, ornithology, conchology, and—and—well, there's the doxology, and a heap more beside, and we get them all."

A second time the young man laughs, but the Professor frowns at his sister's levity. She is a veritable thorn in his side. Now he says, severely,

"You do not understand these things,

Molly; you have no capacity for them. Your brain is—"

"Not a very extraordinary one," she answers, gaily; "but if you are going to paraphrase Tennyson, don't; you'll only spoil him. You know, as well as I do, that you never give a correct poetical quotation. Let me do it for you,—

"Woman's pleasure, woman's pain,  
Nature made them blinder motions, bounded by a  
shallower brain."

"Well, that is a libel on my sex, and I don't feel inclined to forgive it."

"I am busy this morning," the Professor says, coldly, "and shall be obliged if you will leave me in peace."

She is sitting outside on the broad window sill, and her mischievous face is fair to see; so daintily, delicately pink and white it is, with finely-marked dark brows, and long, black lashes shading the hyacinth-blue of her eyes; whilst the little head is literally running over with short, flaxen curls, just reaching the nape of her neck.

Now, as she looks in at the window, she addresses the young man, sanctily,—

"Mr. Banks, you had better make good your retreat whilst you have the opportunity. Humphrey is in one of his dreadfully industrious moods, and he will presently turn and rend you if you in any way destroy his chain of thoughts, or disturb him ever so slightly. Would you like to see our garden?"

"Above all things; I have heard it is perfect."

"Come through the window, please, it is much the quickest way of exit. Humphrey, you ought to shower down blessings upon my head for taking Mr. Banks off your hands."

The Professor only growls out a reply which is not coherent, and the next moment Molly Rygate and Mr. Stuart Banks are together in the lovely old-fashioned garden.

It boasts the queerest little arbours and nooks, the most winding of paths, the greatest wealth of roses, and tall, white lilies. Here and there were great beds of forget-me-nots and "none so pretty;" whole patches of stocks and mignonette; clusters of heavy-scented carnations, with now and again a

lovely sunflowers; and a mass of bright-hued larkspurs.

The whole is enclosed by a sweetbrier hedge, shutting it out completely from public view. Stuart Banks gives a sigh of pure delight.

"What a paradise it is!"

Molly looks pleased.

"It is at its best just now, and its best is perfection, or would be if only we had a pond for water-lilies and rushes. Of course it is old-fashioned; but I like old-fashioned flowers best. You should see it in the spring. First come my snowdrops, and then a regular carpet of crocuses; afterwards the hyacinths and daffodils, with flowers too many to mention."

"You are an enthusiastic botanist?" says Stuart as she pauses.

"Indeed I am not. I hate botany or anything that is learned. Don't you think you would get a little tired sometimes of living with a clever—a very clever person? I love flowers for their own sakes, and I know just the time they should bloom, just how to care for them best; but no more. And I never intend to have my ignorance enlightened. One genius in the family is enough."

Stuart looks at her amusedly, then he says.—

"You must find things very dull occasionally."

"Oh! I do," fervently. "You've no conception what life is like here when the wet days come, and I am forced to stay indoors. There isn't a soul to speak to. Humphrey sits reading or writing all through the long hours, and sometimes he tries to improve my mind by reading abstruse works aloud. And where is the use of trying to improve what I have not got?"

She ends with a laugh, which Stuart echoes. "You would make me believe your intellectual requirements and abilities are of the meanest order!"

"So they are; Humphrey says so. Though, really, at school I was not considered a dull girl. I wish I could go back to those jolly days; but at eighteen that would be impossible," this with a sigh, "so I must try to be content. But the worst of it all is just this, I never can please Humphrey; he says I am not fit to be mistress of the house, that I am too lenient with the servants, and too frivolous."

"He should consider your youth," sympathetically; "he must be many years older than you."

"Oh, he is," opening her dark eyes widely upon him; "he is getting an old man. He is thirty-three." She says this with all the gravity of a sage, all the insolence of extreme youth.

Stuart can hardly refrain from laughter. But if she sees this she does not comment upon it, and is in no way offended.

Molly's temper is of the sweetest.

"Mother and father died when I was very little, and so Humphrey has had to fill their places, and perhaps that has made him graver than he should be. I don't think he cares much for anything but his books. And oh! those dreadful 'elogies; I hate the name of anything pertaining to them."

"What do you like in a literary way?" he questions.

"Novels—good novels, and poetry; only I have not a very big allowance, and Humphrey never buys such books, so I read my little library through again and again. And, of course it is very stupid of me, but I always cry when I come to Little Nell's death, and that poor man 'Nemo' in 'Bleak House.' Oh, I am altogether foolish and childlike."

She looks so gravely at him, with such candour and simplicity, that Stuart feels greatly inclined to draw her near to him, and kiss her as he would a pretty child; but he has sense enough to restrain this impulse, and answers in a matter-of-fact tone,—

"I think you had better come up with me to the Grove; my mother will be pleased to see you, and you shall choose as many books

as you care to read; my library is open to you always."

What a bright flush of pleasure glows in the piquante, child-like face.

"Oh! how good you are, and you really mean it? I don't know how to thank you. And you are quite sure Mrs. Banks will not be vexed by my informal call?"

"She will be delighted; you are already a great favourite with her. Shall we go now? The Professor will not miss us or lament our absence."

It is only a stone's-throw from Sunnyside to the Grove, and Molly makes no other preparation for the walk save to adjust her pretty garden hat; then they passed out of the gate together in silence. But the girl is not long quiet.

"Did you know Humphrey at Cambridge, Mr. Banks?" she questions. "If so, was he always so staid as now?"

"I never met my brother until last May; you see he is four years my senior, so his college career was ended before mine began. But I owe him quite a debt of gratitude; it was he who recommended me to purchase the Grove, and the place suits my mother admirably; she cannot live in town."

Mrs. Banks, a gentle looking woman, whose sight is fast failing her, rises to meet them as they enter.

"Mother," says Stuart, "I have brought Miss Rygate to see you; and to let her rifle my library."

"I heard her voice," Mrs. Banks says in soft tones, "and recognised it. My dear, I cannot see your face very well, but I can guess what it is like by your voice. I am glad that you have taken compassion upon my loneliness. Now, Stuart, ring for Thurston—Miss Rygate will lunch with us."

She is still holding one small, soft hand in her own, and Molly says hurriedly under her breath,—

"You are very very good to me—and if you please will you call me Molly, Miss Rygate sounds formal and unlike me."

Mrs. Banks smiles.

"You shall be Molly from to-day! Ah! what a breath of lavender!"

"I am wearing it at my throat. Would you like me to bring you a great bouquet of it, with some of my roses and carnations; they are just now at their loveliest. I wish, regretfully, 'you could see how lovely my dear old garden is.'

"I echo your wish, my dear; but if I cannot enjoy the beauty of your flowers I can enjoy their scent. If it should be very fine and warm to-morrow I shall ask you to call for me and lead me to Sunnyside; Stuart tells me it is very beautiful. And now for luncheon."

They adjourn to the next room, Mrs. Banks leaning on Molly's arm, and the meal is a bright one. Afterwards Stuart takes her to the library, handing down volume after volume to her, until she has chosen such a store of riches that she exclaims in dismay,—

"I am emptying your shelves entirely. Oh, I cannot take all these; see, I have selected quite a dozen. No, no," as he urges her to take the whole pile. "I will have 'Comin' through the Rye,' 'Nancy,' and 'This Son of Vulcan,' and when I have finished all three I will turn beggar again."

"I hope that you will; it is pleasant to find one's favorite authors appreciated by one's friends. Now, as I have no beautiful grounds to show you, the Grove is in a deplorable state, let me take you to the river; we can row up and down under the limes as far as the first meadow on Farmer Copeman's place."

"How delightful!" then she pauses, adding presently, "Mrs. Banks will come with us; it will be so delicious on the water to-day."

Stuart laughs.

"You don't know my mother's fears; she would not enter a small boat for a king's ransom. Bravery is not her cardinal virtue."

"Then, if you please, I will remain with her."

"You must do nothing of the kind," says Mrs. Banks in her gentle voice. "I did not intend to overhear your conversation, but I could not very well avoid doing so; you were both too intent upon your subject to hear or notice my entrance. I should think the river is at its best now, pray go—unless Mr. Rygate will be anxious about your prolonged absence."

"Oh, Humphrey is never anxious about me!" the girl answers a little sadly. "I think he never remembers my existence, except when I am with him. You see, he is so clever and I so stupid."

Mrs. Banks laughs.

"My dear, we are not all clever in the same way; but we will hold a debate on this subject some day; just at present you are to do nothing but enjoy the lovely hours—and the river."

So once again the young people are out under the blue heavens.

"Great Scott!" says Stuart, ruefully. "What howling wilderness our place looks when compared with yours. I wonder how long it will be before we lick it into shape? Do you think it can be accomplished before next spring?"

"What, the 'licking it into shape?'" laughs Molly. "Well, you may succeed so far; but I would not advise you to expect perfection. Really the Grove ought to be the best place in Delcombe; but its last owner was a very miserly man, and after his wife died he did nothing to it, although he lived for fifty years longer. He kept only two old servants, and—oh! Mr. Banks, what a jolly little boat! I shall go home full of envy and hatred."

"No," says Stuart, giving her a helping hand. "You need feel neither; the *Sandy Jane* is always at your service—as is her master."

"You are very kind," Molly answers, without the slightest suspicion of a blush, she is so thoroughly unconscious of any hidden meaning in his words; "but what if I should trespass on your kindness?"

"You would make me for ever your debtor."

The deep blue eyes meet his fully then.

"You mean that you would be pleased to please me?" she says, gently. "You are more good to me than I deserve. Oh, the lilies! Mr. Banks, the lilies! don't they make you think of Rossetti's 'Blessed Damosel'? May I gather some?"

The fair sweet face is all aglow with happiness. As he looks at her, Stuart's heart beats a little faster. He would have been less than man not to have been stirred by her beauty and her innocence. But he says, quietly enough,—

"I will get you the lilies if you will tell me the story of 'The Blessed Damosel.' We can moor the boat here nicely."

Molly needs no second asking. Perhaps the greatest of all her charms—and they are many—is her utter freedom from self-consciousness.

With her little hands loosely folded, her eyes gazing before her through the dim vista of far-away groves, she recites, not as one who would fain impress an audience with her skillful rendering, but as one who enters into the master poet's thoughts, longings, wishes, and regrets; and her voice gives new beauty to the beautiful words, until when she ends with that one exquisite line,

"She wpt—I heard her tears."

Stuart is just a little afraid to look at her, for he knows by her voice there are tears in her eyes, and he is not sure that he is quite as composed as he would wish to be.

So they sit in silence, the girl thinking of the great master whose words have such power to move her; the man remembering one woman who had seemed to him of exceeding fairness. He had loved her, he had worshipped her; but they had quarrelled and parted.

It felt now the fault was all his own, and

he did not so much as know where she was or how she fared.

She had been poor when he left her, and few had ever guessed he loved her. "Pride had stood between them—that was three years ago."

"Oh, well, to all intents and purposes he had forgotten her, and this girl, with the blue eyes and flaxen hair, was fair to see, sweet and gracious. Why should he not choose her out of all the world for his wife? He loved her; there was not the slightest doubt of that, and so why should he not seek to win her?"

And yet Molly's very unconsciousness prevents any declaration of his intentions he would make. If she cares for him she gives no sign. His wonders does she guess what takes him so often to Sunnyside, and thinks, with smile, what pleasure it will be to see the love-light leap into her eyes, the sweet face glow instinct with her affection.

And Molly goes on her way unheeding, not so much as recking if this man is dear to her or no; happy with the thoughtless happiness of a child, who expects every morrow to be as bright as to-day.

One day the Professor walks up to the Grove.

"My dear madam," he says, in his peculiarly stiff style, "I have come to beg a great favour of you. I am called, most unexpectedly, to a conference, and shall be from home probably a month. Molly is too thoughtless to be left in sole charge of the house, and I thought—at least I hoped—you would be willing to receive her until my return. I will defray all her expenses, and shall be most grateful."

"Let there be no question of expenses or gratitude between us," says Mrs. Banks, quickly. "Molly will be a most welcome guest. I think, too, you must know what hopes Stuart and myself have respecting her."

The Professor stares blankly at her.

"I mean," the lady continues, "that I hope one day to see her my son's wife. She is a dear child; and when I am gone Stuart will be all alone!"

"Molly is well enough," Humphrey answers, coldly; "but she is a mere child, and thoughtless beyond words; but if you are willing to accept her as your daughter I have no objection to raise. Young girls are a terrible nuisance to their relatives—as a rule!"

## CHAPTER II.

"I think," says Molly, with a blissful sigh, "I am just the happiest girl under the sun. Of one thing I am quite certain, I never lived until I came to the Grove; and your mother is simply adorable!"

She is lying in a hammock slung for her sole use by Stuart, and she looks up now at the big, stalwart fellow beside her, with clear and happy eyes.

"Aren't you very, very fond of her?" she questions, naively.

"Very," says Stuart, gravely. "I was lucky in both my parents, and that is a miracle, for, you see, a fellow can't choose his foreparents."

"No, nor his brothers and sisters," she responds, regretfully. "If I could have chosen for myself I would have four or five of each, all so linked together by affection; all so ready to make the best of everything—good or bad—that we should be a happy party. And reigning over us all, a mother like your mother, and a good, wise-father, whose loving wisdom should hold us all in check without galling us."

"You are picturing an almost ideal state of affairs, Molly."

"O, no!" with quick dissent, "there must be hundreds of families like that!"

"I wish I could believe so; but I have seen more of the world than you, little girl, and my trust is less than yours. My hope——"

"Stop!" cries Molly, swiftly. "Don't take such good things from me as trust and hope;

and, oh! pray," with a touch of petulance, "don't try to affect cynicism; it does not sit well upon you!"

"Upon my word," laughs Stuart, "you are the most remarkably candid young woman it has been my fortune to meet. How I pity Rygat!"

"Why should you? I can assure you he treats all my reproaches, all my nasty little speeches as the outcome of childlike temper. It is not flattering to me. Oh!" with a shake of her fair head, "there is no danger of any girl getting spoiled by praise up at Sunnyside. We are the weaker sex, and must be taught our shortcomings, provided that we do not know them. Here everything is so different."

"And you would not mind remaining with us always?" questions Stuart, with a glance, which pierces even Molly's unconsciousness, and sends the blood rushing over face and throat. "You would not find it hard to live with my mother?"

"No," she says, not quite so composedly as she usually speaks, "I cannot love her enough for her goodness to me. I shall simply hate leaving her, and a fortnight of my stay is gone already."

"There yet remains a fortnight to you," answers Stuart, more glad than he will show that at last he has been able to stir her from her maiden calmness; "and, perhaps, many other weeks at the close of that period. The Professor appears to take kindly to his new surroundings."

Molly raises herself on her elbow, laughing a little.

"If I did not know Humphrey was quite impervious to any attacks on his affections, I should say he had yielded to the weakness of other men; he writes so very fully of a certain lady's talents, of her appreciation of his own acquirements. Oh! would it not be just awful if he married a blue-stocking. How terribly she would despise me."

"I hate a blue stocking; so does any man with a grain of sense," announces Stuart, bluntly. "But I suppose the Professor's taste lies that way; and, of course, the Ranbys are a learned lot."

"They have no daughters," says Molly, "only two dreadful sons, and a little niece of five. So this lady must be a visitor; I hope she is too impossibly ugly even for Humphrey to marry. He doesn't admire beauty, but still he draws the line at a certain point of plainness."

The young man laughs; then dismissing the subject lightly, says,—

"Don't you think an excursion to Chevystone would be pleasant? The river is at its best to-day, and we can take a basket with us, and lunch in Chevystone Valley. It will be delicious there on this sultry day; and after a good rest we can come back leisurely, and yet reach home in fine time for dinner. Suppose you dress, whilst I see to the ordering of lunch."

Molly springs from the hammock as lightly as a bird.

"I'll not be ten minutes. Confess, Mr. Banks; you always thought a woman's toilet quite a protracted affair."

"I do still—in most cases; but you are as unlike most girls in this thing as in all others."

"How am I different in other things?" with wide eyes fixed questioningly on him.

"I beg your pardon," he answers, laughing. "You resemble your sisters in one respect; you are curious, and remember that curiosity is often fatal, and always deplorable!"

"I shall remember that women don't hold the monopoly of it," the girl retorts as she flies over the lawn, and into the house.

She is ready for the trip long before cook has packed the little hamper, and as she stands in the fall glow of the August sun, it would be difficult even for the most adverse critic to find a flaw in her fresh loveliness.

She is wearing a dainty gown of pale blue, which harmonizes beautifully with her fair skin and flaxen curls; and she carries a huge

white sunshade, from under which the deep, sweet eyes smile for sheer gladness to find the world so fair.

"You have made less haste than I," she says as Stuart appears with the hamper. "Don't you know procrastination is the thief of time?"

"I know that you are developing an awful irreverence for me; a fortnight ago you would not have addressed me in such fashion."

"Familiarity breeds contempt," she cries, breaking into gayest laughter; "and really you are not a very imposing personage. You have no dignity at all," this with a perfect imitation of Humphrey's manner.

"You take advantage of my helpless condition, Molly. I can't very well punish you as you deserve whilst I am laden thus. But my vengeance will keep; I promise you, you shall not escape unscathed."

"I am not afraid."

And then he has assisted her into the boat, and they are drifting down the river, under the blue sky and overarching trees, between banks sweet and bright with the blossoms of August boasts.

Through all her little life Molly never forgets this one divine afternoon, the almost silent row to Chevystone Valley, the beauty and the glory of the scenery; the gay luncheon, when Stuart waits upon her needs, as the old knights are said to have waited on their ladies' pleasure; when he speaks to her in new tones, in new language, until the child's heart wakes at the magic of his power, and the woman's heart within her quickens into life.

Then the journey home! Oh, poor little Molly! the days are not far distant when she will grow sick and shudder at the mere remembrance of it.

She sings to him; all those artless, beautiful old ballads she knows and loves so well. And he listens with bated breath, with eager eyes fixed on the fairness of her young, sweet face, until suddenly a nightingale in an adjacent wood breaks into a mad flood of melody. Instantly Molly pauses.

"Hush!" she says, scarcely above a whisper, "let us listen; that is music indeed."

The boat drifts, and drifts, and drifts. Not a word is spoken; the beauty and solemnity of the early summer night is over them both.

Molly's head droops until her face is almost hidden, and the little hands are tightly clasped.

The bird's song ceases suddenly as it began; the sky has grown darker, the low stars are fading out.

"Molly," says Stuart, "sing again."

She shivers under his touch.

"No; not here, not now," and he does not urge her further.

They are nearly home now.

"We are later than I thought we should be," he says.

"Yes, we have lolitered so by the way."

"Don't you know that I am always loath to part from you?" Stuart questions as he helps her to land. "Have you not guessed that, little Molly?"

She gives him one quick, startled glance; then drawing away her hand, says,—

"Mrs. Banks will be waiting us; do not linger longer," and leads the way to the house.

But she is very shy and reserved with him throughout the remainder of the evening. She will not, or cannot, meet his glances; she responds to his words in monosyllables only.

But Stuart is wise in such matters, and his heart beats high with hope. He loves her—oh! yes, he loves her, more than all the world besides; and yet from time to time a dark, sweet face, with starry eyes, rises before him, and he hears a low voice saying, with a world of passion in its tones,—

"I love you, oh! heart of my heart, I love you."

And upstairs a girl is on her knees, praying, with all her innocent soul, that the dream she has begun to dream may end in blissful

reality; that Heaven will have in its keeping the one she knows at last to be the one love of her life. Poor little Molly! oh, poor little Molly!

Early in the morning she walks over to Sunnyside for the bouquet which Mrs. Banks so much prizes; she is shy of meeting Stuart alone, and carefully avoids his favourite haunts, so that he does not see her at all until luncheon, and then, to his chagrin, she utterly refuses to accompany him to the river or dive down to Chevesstone. It is not until evening that he chances upon her alone, she having walked down to the paddock separating the garden from the orchard. A little Alderney calf has thrust its nose into her hand, and, forgetful of her recent embarrassment, she turns her bright, sweet face towards him.

"Come, see how tame Billy is with me, and he is generally so averse to strangers; do you know, I am quite proud of my conquest."

"There is not a creature about the place that has escaped your sway!" Stuart says, softly. "I begin to believe in witchcraft. And pray, what will you give me for this?" holding a letter before her eyes.

"I will give you thanks; it is from Humphrey; I would know his awful scrawl anywhere. I wonder if you would like to hear about his first literary attempt?"

"Of course I would."

"Well, he wrote an awfully clever article on an 'ology' of some sort, and he sent it to a very very learned journal. At the end of a fortnight it was returned with a note from the editor, saying that doubtless the essay was of a most brilliant description, but he himself was not versed in hieroglyphs, and if Mr. Rygate, he was not professor then, would send it in his mother-tongue it should be duly considered."

"That was nasty for the Professor," said Smart with a hearty laugh. "What did he do?"

"Oh, he tore the article up in a rage, and favoured that editor no more. Now, with your permission, I will read Humphrey's latest scrawl."

As Stuart watches her, he sees the young, sweet face shadow, the pretty lips quiver, but before he can speak she turns impetuously towards him.

"Read it," she says with high disdain; "soon or late you must know, and when a thing is unpleasant it is best to get it over quickly."

He takes the letter from her, and this is what he reads.

"DEAR MOLLY,—

"I do not like to seem to impose upon Mrs. Banks' great kindness, but if only she would be so good as to give you shelter for a week beyond the stated time, I should be both glad and grateful, as I cannot possibly return home at the time appointed. To make a short story of the matter, I am about to be married to the lady of whom I have written you before. And I feel assured that in taking this step I am not only making my happiness, but consulting yours."

"We are to be married on Monday morning next, Mr. Radby's brother performing the ceremony, and we shall proceed at once to Greece, after which we shall return to England and at once settle down to our new life. Your new sister's society will be beneficial to you in every way; she is staid in manner, gifted beyond ordinary women, and I expect she will be a great assistance to me in my researches. Please have everything in readiness for us by the twenty-fifth. You need not trouble to reply by letter; a telegram will answer every purpose."

"Your affectionate brother,

"HUMPHREY."

Stuart tosses the letter aside.

"What a callous brute!" he cries, indignantly, "he does not think of you at all; and he has not even mentioned the name or pedigree of his lady love."

"No," says Molly, viciously, "that seems a proof that she is not all that fancy paints, or might paint, if we did not know Humphrey. I guess she is a horrid woman of uncertain age; freckled, spectacled, awfully learned, and awfully drabble-tailed. Oh!" with a break in her sweet voice, "I never can endure life with such a creature; she will make the house hideous, and perhaps she will even spoil my garden—my own lovely, beloved garden. I wish I had been born a boy; then I could have run away."

"You need not change your sex for such a purpose. You need not run far before you find a happier and brighter home!" says Smart, eagerly.

"What do you mean?" she questions, lifting frank eyes to his; and then a sudden shyness possesses her—there is such love on his face, such meaning in his looks.

"I mean, little Molly, that I want you to stay here, not as a guest, but as mistress of the Grove, my own dearly loved and honoured wife; I have wished it very long now. Will you come?"

He tries to put an arm about her, but she holds him back a moment.

"Take time for thought," she says very uncertainly. "You have got to remember that I am not a clever or witty companion; Humphrey says I am very stupid, and he ought to know."

"I won't listen to a repetition of Humphrey's nonsense. I want you, and I should hate a clever, dogmatical woman about the place. Little darling! my little darling, won't you promise to make the Grove a paradise for me?"

She lifts her eyes to his.

"Do you need me really—really?"

"More than I can tell. My pretty one, my pretty one! You can believe me?"

"If I did not I would pray to die," she says very solemnly. "I cannot imagine how one can live on with a broken heart."

"We will not speak of broken hearts when our own are so glad. Kiss me!"

Not a word does Molly say as she lifts her mouth to his, she is much too happy for speech to be easy; so they stand there in the gloaming in a silence which each is loath to break. But at length Stuart says,

"The Professor will be surprised and perhaps a little angry; because always he has regarded you as a child. But we have our remedy; we must do as he has done and hurry on our wedding."

Later he takes her to Mrs. Banks.

"Mother," he says, "I give you a daughter!"

She stretches out her hands to the girl, who, clutching them closely in her own, falls on her knees before her, and with buried face waits for the elder woman to speak.

"My dear, this is a happy night. It is a thing I have long prayed for. Come to my arms, little daughter! little daughter! You will never grudge me a share of my son's love?"

"Oh, no! oh, no! I will serve you and love you dearly, for Stuart's sake and your own. You have called me daughter, and, by Heaven's help, I will be your own loving and dutiful child!"

Poor little Molly! Poor, pretty, faithful Molly!

### CHAPTER III.

MOLLY'S telegram is duly sent, Stuart masterfully forbidding her to write.

"Our news will keep until the Professor's return," he says. "He has not studied your convenience or your feelings in any way, and as you are now my property, I intend looking after and maintaining your dignity."

"My dignity!" echoes Molly, with a ringing laugh. "I have not any; and you don't expect much from a creature only five feet high, do you?"

"Well, suppose we call it by another name.

I don't mean that you should be slighted or flouted any more by your revered brother. You belong to me, and I intend to take as much care of my sweetheart as I hope one day to take of my dear little wife."

The hot colour flames into the fair young face.

"And you won't be disappointed in me ever? You won't grow to think me foolish, and so get weary of me?" she questions, clinging about him.

"Never, Molly. I swear it upon my honour; and I won't allow you to call yourself harsh names. Mr. Humphrey Rygate has so persistently snubbed you that you are impregnated with the idea of your own stupidity and insignificance. All that has got to be altered, little darling."

How the days fly! Almost before she is aware of it, the time comes for her return to Sunnyside. She must superintend the final arrangements for the reception of the bride and bridegroom. So she makes all the rooms beautiful with her favourite flowers; orders a *recherché* dinner, adorning the table with her own pretty hands, until it is a vision of loveliness.

"Not that she will appreciate it," she says to Stuart, with a dolorous sigh; "she is sure to be as much in love with the 'ologies' as Humphrey, or he never would have married her. And you must not come up to-night, because I should certainly let them guess our secret; and it would be hateful to have a strange woman staring at me through her spectacles, they all wear them, and criticising my behaviour, ridiculing my blushes. Oh, dear! I don't even know her name! How shall I address her? Shall it be thus?" laughter lighting up her pretty eyes as she makes a rustic curtsey, saying, "Professores. I welcome you to our ancestral halls, which I trust your genius will illuminate for long years!"

Stuart laughs. Then he catches her close; she looks so irresistible in her youth and beauty, with love in her sweet eyes, and that saucy smile upon her lips.

"You little witch! I wonder if you know what charm there is in this 'infinite variety' of yours. Are you ever the same creature for ten consecutive minutes?"

"I am always the same in my love for you," she answers, simply; and what man could fail to be flattered by such words from such pretty lips?

When he is gone Molly flies up to her room. She must make a hasty toilet if she would be ready to receive the bride. But, hasty as it is, it is none the less effective.

She has selected a pretty gown of sea-green, daintily trimmed with white lace; and at her breast and waist she wears clusters of scarlet verbena; she has even adorned her pretty head with a wreath of the same. Of jewels she has none save the diamond ring which is sign and seal of her betrothal, and not for an hour will she discard that precious token of bondage.

As she descends the stairs she hears the sound of carriage wheels, and, flushed by excitement and timidity, hurries into the hall.

No matter how obnoxious the new sister may prove, Molly's kind little heart compels her to give the stranger a generous welcome.

The doors are flung wide. Standing there, she sees Humphrey alight, and then assist his companion out; and Molly can scarcely repress a cry as she looks on the lady of his choice.

She is tall and slender, and she cannot possibly be more than twenty-five; her face is a perfect oval, dark and with a shade of melancholy upon it; the mouth is sweet, and the deep grey eyes, so dark as sometimes to seem black, are shadowed by heavy lashes.

A sort of pity for her comes into Molly's heart. Why has she married Humphrey? Why does she look so weary and sad? And then she goes forward to meet her, blushing and nervous; and before she can speak, Humphrey says—

"This is Molly. Molly, this is your sister Mercy."

Mrs. Rygate gives one swift glance at the slight figure, the piquante, fair face, and a look of tenderness comes into her eyes.

"We must be very good friends," she says, in a sweet, low voice, and kisses the girl gently.

Then Humphrey, who does not believe in sentiment, breaks in quickly,—

"Perhaps you will take Mercy to her room; I hope you have all things in readiness. And we will dine at the usual hour."

"So I supposed," answers Molly, with more than her usual spirit. "Knowing how punctilious you are, I expressly ordered dinner at six."

"Thank you. I have work to do afterwards, and must be doubly industrious because I have taken so long a holiday. Mercy, you will make all possible haste with your toilet?"

"Yes," is her only answer as she turns to follow Molly.

Once in her own room, she lets her cloak slip from her shoulders, and stands a moment, looking weary from the window; then, all suddenly, she puts out a hand to Molly, crying, with pain in her sweet voice,—

"Let us be friends—dear friends—always. I am very very lonely; and my life has been dark."

Strange words for so young a bride to utter; they go to Molly's tender heart, and, lifting her face to Mercy's to be kissed, she says,—

"I will be your friend and your sister, now and so long as we both live; you look good, and I know you will be kind. Oh, poor Mercy! have you no friends?"

"None," sadly. "I was left an orphan early; my youth was spent at a charity school for clergymen's daughters."

"But you have Humphrey," says Molly, hoping to hear some expression of affection for her husband from Mercy's lips; but she only answers, wearily, and with a curious look in her eyes,—

"Yes, I have Humphrey."

"And now you will have me; I have not so many friends that I have no room in my heart for you. Oh, dear! how very very different you are to the picture I drew of you," laughing now. "I imagined you were a dreadfully learned woman, with stammering gowns and spectacles. Humphrey wrote that you were clever. 'Do you,' this in a tone of awe, 'do you indulge in the 'ologies'?"

"'Oicries!' echoed Mercy. "Please, explain; I do not understand."

So Molly explains, whilst the bride listens with an added shade of weariness upon her face; exclaiming at the close of the girl's speech,—

"I hate science; I hate everything connected with it! A lesson-book is quite sufficient to disturb my serenity. If you had been a governess for eight years, you would understand my feeling. Oh! did you not know I was governess at the Ranbys? My duties there were comparatively light during the day; there was only a niece of Mr. Ranby's to instruct. But the evenings were awful. Mr. Ranby, you know, is a very literary man, and he used to expect me to copy out all his notes, etcetera, because I write legibly; and after an hour or two of such dissipation I entertained what guests were in the house by playing for them, and singing to them. And I was treated as a mere machine. But I was friendless, I dared not complain, and, with great bitterness, 'my salary was liberal—eighteen pounds a year; just ten less than the cook received.'

Molly begins to understand, or thinks she does, why Mercy married her brother. It was to escape from bitter bondage, not because she loves him; and yet the child's heart is pliful towards her.

"You must try to forget all these things now; we are going to make you happy."

A little sob catches the bride's breath.

"You are kind to me; I shall love you all

my life!" and then her eyes fall upon Molly's engagement ring, and she says, with keen pain in her voice, "You are already betrothed! You will soon leave us! And I shall miss you sorely! sorely! But, Molly, dear little Molly, cling close to your lover if he is a good man and true; let nothing ever come between you. Love is the breath of life!"

She pauses suddenly. Her beautiful eyes are suffused with tears; and Molly, trembling at her own temerity, questions,—

"And do you not love Humphrey so?"

Her arms are about Mercy's slender waist, and she feels a tremor pass through her whole frame, but she answers, steadily,—

"He is my husband."

And after that, Molly dare question her no more; but she feels miserably that this marriage cannot be a happy one, and her heart is sore for her brother's bride, whose sweet voice once more breaks the silence.

"You are very young so soon to have made choice of a husband. And oh, dear little girl, I hope it is for your lasting happiness."

"You shall judge for yourself to-morrow," says Molly, with a smile and a blush. "I do not fear your criticism; I am the proudest girl in the world. And now let me help you dress; Humphrey hates to wait."

Mrs. Rygate makes a speedy toilet, donning a dress of plain black net, unrevealed by any fleck of colour, at which Molly cries,—

"You must not wear that sombre thing; it is wholly unsuited to you."

"Humphrey likes me to go soberly attired."

"Bother Humphrey! He would neither know, nor care, if you wore a sack, or a velvet gown; so I am going to brighten this for you."

She leans out of the window as she speaks, and gathering great clusters of China roses, and some sprays of scarlet japonica, fastens them deftly on Mercy's corsage, at her waist, and in the train of her dress.

"What an improvement!" she cries delightedly. "Now for your hair. Oh! what beautiful hair it is, so long and thick, and as glossy as a raven's wing; it is like Eily Connor's—she was Irish, and a school friend."

"I am Irish too. I am a Belfast Denison; my people once were in authority there, but they fell on evil days. How nice you have made me look! There is the hell! let us go at once," and it seems to Molly she is already afraid of her husband.

He looks up from a book as they enter, frowning a little at Mercy's unwanted splendor.

"That is Molly's work," he says, coldly. "Do not let her draw your thoughts from more serious subjects. I expect you rather to form her tastes, and her mind."

"It is a hopeless task," retorts Molly, with an impudent smile; but the young bride says nothing, only her face grows somewhat paler, and her lips are set in a stern line.

The meal is a silent one, and Molly is delighted when it ends. She and Mercy will have a cosy chat in the drawing-room before Humphrey joins them. But in this she is mistaken, for, having hurried over dessert, her brother says,—

"Are you ready, Mercy? I would like to get off those papers to-night."

"I am perfectly ready," quizzically.

"What!" cries the irrepressible Molly. "Does Mercy help you? And must she work to-night of all nights?"

"We are not all butterflies. Some of us realise we have a mission to fulfil. Come, Mercy!" and he leads the way to the study, whilst Molly, standing erect with eyes alight with indignation, says aloud,

"I know why he married her now; it was that she should help him, drudge for him, slave for him. But why, oh, why, with her youth and beauty, did she give herself to him? I know she never loved him, and she never can. Why was it? Why was it?"

Poor little Molly, dear little Molly. She was soon to learn why Mercy had done the rash deed; and the knowledge would break her heart.

One, two, three hours pass by; then Molly rises with indignation in her heart, and straight she goes to the study. Mercy is writhing still from Humphrey's dictation.

"It is half-past eleven," says the girl, standing in the doorway; "don't you ever intend to leave off work? Mercy looks too weary to write another line."

"My wife is not forgetful of her duties, she does not wish to ignore them," Humphrey answers, coldly. He himself is not fatigued, why should Mercy be?

Molly advances to the centre of the room.

"She is tired with travel," she says, pleadingly.

"She has rested well since," he retorts, with some show of impatience; and Mercy adds, glancing lovingly toward that little figure,—

"I shall soon have finished. Go to bed, dear, I shall soon follow."

But it is long past midnight when the crawls wearily upstairs, with eyes that scarce can see the way she takes.

"Was it for this?" she questions in her heart, "was it for this I stilled my love? I am only his slave, his amanuensis! not his wife. He does not know what love is! But he has lifted me to his level, he has given me his name, and, Heaven helping, I will not fail in my duty to him—if only for that child's sake. But I wish, oh! wish all my aching heart, I wish I were dead."

And this is the bride's home-coming.

Early in the morning Molly rises. The sun is shining into her room, the birds are making their gladdest music, and she, forgetful of all that troubled her last night, dresses hastily, and gets down to the quiet, lovely meadows beyond Sunnyside.

Her feet fall so lightly they scarcely brush the dew from the long lush grass; her voice sometimes rises in melody, sometimes cheerily bids her dog Snap follow her flying steps, and her face is instinct with happiness. Never any more, perhaps, will she be quite as glad as now.

"Heaven is more good to me than I deserve," she thinks, reverently. "I can never be grateful enough. Poor Mercy, how she must envy my happy, happy lot."

And out in the meadows she meets Stuart.

"I knew where to find you," he says, with a gay laugh. "I am learning all your favourite haunts; and as you drove me away so ruthlessly last night, I determined to make the most of this morning's opportunities. Now tell me about the bride. Is she such an ogre as we imagined?"

"She is not an ogre at all. Oh, Stuart, she is quite young, and very beautiful; and she hasn't any friends, so perhaps that is why she married Humphrey, for I don't think she loves him, and," sinking her voice to a whisper, "he kept her writing for him until after midnight. I heard her come upstairs, and her step sounded so weary. I believe he chose her simply because she is clever. Perhaps I ought not to say that of my own brother, but you don't know yet how selfish he is where his fame is concerned. I have been thanking Heaven all this morning that I was not born a genius or even sufficiently brilliant to be secretary to a genius."

"You are a very irreverent young woman," says Stuart, lightly, as she stops to gather meadow sweet flowers by the river's brink. "How did the bride greet you? And what is her name?"

"She was very kind, and we are to be good friends," answers Molly, looking dreamily towards the brightening east. "I like her very much, and her name is Mercy. It used to be Mercy Denison."

Stuart gives a quick sharp cry, and Molly's eyes came back to his face with a startled look in their blue depths.

"What is it?" she asks. "Are you hurt? Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing," he answers, with a faint laugh. "I was a brute to frighten you. I have only twisted my ankle rather severely, it will be all

right soon ; but he is very white, and there is a strained expression about his mouth.

"Lean on me," says Molly, "I am very strong ; and pray let the flowers go, we can get more another day. How disappointed Mercy will be ! I had told her about you, and, of course, she is anxious to know you. But, perhaps Humphrey will let me bring her to the Grove this evening. Oh, by the way, I think I forgot to tell her your name. Oh ! how she will love your mother !"

#### CHAPTER IV.

MOLLY walks home very soberly. The remainder of their "constitutional" was not over-pleasant.

Stuart has been unnaturally quiet, and, despite his complaint of a twisted ankle, he has needed little or no support from her ; neither has he limped. His answers to her anxious inquiries have been gentle but brief ; and, without knowing why, the girl feels there is a cloud on her happiness.

She leaves him at the Grove gates, although he asks her to breakfast with his mother and himself.

"No," she says, "you will be needing rest, and Mercy might feel herself neglected, so I will go home. Shall I come again before the day is over ?"

"No, little darling !" he answers, gently—all the more gently because he is deceiving her. "I shall keep to my room, so that I am able to do you service to-morrow. Kiss me ; no one can see you. Good-bye, and Heaven bless you !"

And yet, in spite of his words, she goes away with a heavy heart. As she enters Sunnyside the breakfast bell rings, and she meets Mercy, pale and wan, in the hall.

"You sat up too long last night," she says, gently ; "you must have a good rest to-day." And following sharply on her own sweet tones comes Humphrey's voice.—

"Mercy is not accustomed to eat the bread of idleness. Her life is full of high aims and ambitions, as my wife's should be. Try to take example from her."

"She is not well. It is brutal to make her work," retorts the girl.

"Dear, I am quite well," Mercy answers, "and anxious to assist your brother to the utmost of my power. He has given me all I have. I owe him a heavy debt."

Molly is silent, but the meal passes in greatest discomfort to her, and, being ended, Humphrey carries his young wife away with him ; nor is she seen again that day save at function and dinner.

Molly is furious ; but there is no one to whom she can speak, and so she is forced to add her peace.

Up in his own room Stuart is "shamming ill," trying with might and main to face the cruel problem of his life. She has come into it again—she, the woman he had loved with his whole soul, and she does not know it. For her sake and for Molly's he must not let the truth be divulged.

Not for worlds, oh ! not for worlds would he hurt the childlike heart he knows is all his own. Heaven grant these two women have not been left together, or surely all must be revealed, and little Molly, pretty Molly, what will she do ? He would write Mercy, telling her her whole story, how he has learned, since they parted, that she was wholly innocent of the charge he had brought against her ; he would tell her, too, how, failing to find her, he had sought, and found, as he believed, consolation in Molly's love. Then he reflects that his letter may fall into Humphrey's hands, and so harm Mercy, and that must never be. But if she meets him unexpectedly, what then ?

She will betray herself and him by her agitation. He springs to his feet. It is now eleven, and the doors are closed ; but he finds means by which to let himself out, unheard and unseen, and, not guessing in any way

what he shall do when he reaches Sunnyside, he bands his steps thicker.

There is a faint light in Molly's room ; as he sees it he groans out a blessing on her. There is a broader light in the study, and Humphrey is sitting there, his head bowed over a huge volume. But Stuart does not stay to look at the man, his gaze is fixed upon a slender figure at the gate, a woman's figure.

Her arms are resting upon the topmost bar ; her face is hidden upon them, and the sound of her sobs reaches him where he stands. He makes a quick movement forward.

"Mercy ! " he cries, "oh, Mercy ! "

Her white and frightened face is lifted suddenly, then she throws out her hands with a low and bitter cry.

"Go away," she says, "go away, Stuart Banks, I am a wedded wife. We must both forget !"

"We must both forget," he echoes, heavily. "You are a wife, and I—Heaven help her—am Molly Rygate's future husband. She must never know ! It would break her heart ! Mercy, help me to spare her ?"

"That child, that child ! Oh, Stuart, be good to her. Make her life happier than mine is. She has been like an angel to me ; for my sake, she has not suffered."

"It was for this I came to-night. I would not have you meet me unprepared. I would not let my little Molly guess our story for all the world could give. She is not strong to suffer, and she loves me."

"Yes, she loves you, and, thank Heaven, she is so pretty and good that she cannot fail in the end to win your heart."

But he cries out with bitterness.

"I hoped and believed it would be so. I imagined I had forgotten you ; but it needed only the news Molly gave me this morning, to show me what a blind fool I have been. Mercy, why, oh ! why did you keep such long silence ? Why did you set an effectual barrier between us by marrying one you do not love, and never can ?"

"You had long left me. My pride forbade me to recall myself to your memory. They say that men so easily forget : I thought you had forgotten. Then I went to live with the Ranbys. I was treated there as a galley slave. I was never expected to be weary or indisposed, and all the while I knew my physical strength was giving way under the strain placed upon it. Then Professor Rygate came. In a little while he asked me to marry him, and, although his wooing was of the most prosaic, I thought he loved me. Why else should a man wish to make a penniless, friendless woman his wife ? I was grateful to him—oh ! I cannot make you understand how grateful—and I said to myself, 'I will serve him as never woman served husband before.' I saw myself a contented if not a happy wife ; and so we were married. Then I learned how dreadful had been my mistake. This man, whose name I bear, wanted, not some one to love, but a mere machine to work for him. Long ago you told me I was beautiful—my beauty has no charm for him—he only saw in me a creature to assist him on the road to fame. On the very day of our marriage my work began, and I am weary already, oh ! most weary."

She has poured out her complaint in a passionate torrent of words, and a dull fury possesses the man as he listens. He had loved her so in that dear dead past each remembers with heart-sickness. He loves her now ; but of this he must not dare to speak. She belongs to another now, and his word is pledged to Molly. So he says unsteadily,

"Is there nothing I can do for you ; nothing that may make your life a little brighter, a little happier ? Mercy, you have only to command me."

"I know—I know. You are very good ; but let there be no communication, beyond that which necessity demands, between us. It will be easier for both. And never, never by word or sign wake Molly from her happy

dream ; beside yourself none other has given me such kindness and such welcome ! "

"I will remember," he answers ; "but, Mercy ! Mercy ! this is worse than death ! "

"Death is not an evil," she says, brokenly, "but a blessing to the weary, and those whose lives go by on broken wing. It is the only boon I crave now ! "

What can he say ? What words can comfort her in her misery ? And whilst he pauses, fighting hard to retain his wisdom and his self-control, a sharp, querulous voice cries,—

"Mercy ! Mercy ! are you there ? "

"Yes," she answers, swiftly, afraid lest Humphrey's short-sighted eyes shall discern her companion, "I am coming." Then to the man at the gate, "Go ! do not try to see me any more alone. Good-bye. Heaven bless you ! " and he hears the light fall of her feet as she hurried up the garden path to join her husband, who is also her master and tyrant.

"What were you doing down by the gate ? he questions, irritably.

"My head was aching badly. I thought the night air might cure it."

"It appears to me your headaches are very frequent since you became my wife," folly. "You have lost all zeal with regard to science ; and I did not raise you to your present position merely that you should lead a butterfly existence ! "

The great dark eyes open widely upon his face, and a flush of indignation colours her pale cheeks ; but with an effort which costs her much, she answers never a word. Only as her dress touches him in passing she shrinks from the contact, as though it hurts her.

Up in her own room, with her heavy hair unbound, her neck and shoulders gleaming white against its dark flow, for she has removed her dress, she stands erect and rigid, whilst slowly from her quivering lips fall the words,—

"Bought and sold ! Bought and sold ! There is no love to sweeten my bondage ! And then all suddenly her composure fails her ; she sinks weeping upon the ground in a huddled heap. "Now may Heaven be merciful, and help me to do my duty. I am very weak, and my courage has gone wholly from me."

She is wakened in the morning by Molly's voice—Molly singing beneath her window, with something of sadness in her sweet notes.

"Mother, the night, the night is long,

And love is calling sweet and low ;  
I am so weak, and he so strong :

Oh, mother, guard me, lest I go.

Oh, mother, help me, pray for me ;

My heart will break, the storm is wild ;  
Oh, hold me in thy arms to thee,

And pray with me as when a child.

Father, in our tribulation,

When our way is lost in night,  
In the time of our temptation,

Guide us with thy heavenly light."

Mercy covers her face with her hands ; but as she listens the tears that rise to her eyes are not those of self-pity, rather of gratitude that here, lying ready to her hand, is her help and her comfort ; and a sweet sense of peace and security falls upon her. All unconsciously Molly will help her to bear her burden, will strengthen and strengthen her.

She goes down almost with a cheerful face, but it is hard for her as the days wear by, and Stuart presents himself to ask for Molly's hand. She is compelled to remain at her desk whilst he tells his story to Humphrey, and she dare not lift her eyes to the weary face of this man she has loved so long so long !

Like one in a painful dream, she hears the Professor's callous voice saying, as one tired of a subject,—

"Of course, Banks, you please yourself. You are old enough to know your own mind. You will regret your choice, for Molly will no

grow older or wiser with increasing years; but that is not my outdoor, and I should like the ceremony to take place soon. I have no interest in the sentimentalities of lovers."

The young wife winces palpably, but Stuart says, quickly,—

"I will marry Molly as soon as she will fix the day, and I am sure that I shall find all I need in her. She is good and true, although, as she quaintly puts it, she is not learned in the 'ologies.'

"I have no more to say. You will excuse me if I seem abrupt and discourteous. I plead business as my excuse. Mercy, have you finished those notes?" and considering himself dismissed, Stuart goes out in search of Molly.

He tells her of his interview with Humphrey, and begs her to fix the date of their wedding. Surely, when she is once his wife, he will forget the old love and the present misery. But though he is so kind and tender to her, Molly feels, with a loving woman's instinct, that in some way the relationship between them is changed. She misses something in his touch, his voice, his smile, and a chill fear possesses her.

But not a hint of this does she give; childlike she may be, but she has all a woman's pride, and she will not let him see that so slight a change in him can make so great a difference in her happiness. So she says with a little laugh,—

"Oh, we won't be married yet for ever so long. I am only eighteen, and—and, oh well! such early marriages always turn out badly."

He looks at her in surprise.—

"If you are young, I have come to years of discretion, and Heaven knows I will make your happiness my chief care. And think, Molly dearest, how much my mother needs her daughter."

"Whatever happens," says Molly, seriously, "I will always love her; but I will not marry you yet. Yes, I love you! I think no girl ever gave her heart more fully to her lover than I have done. But do not urge me farther. In a little while—a few months perhaps—you may ask again, and I may answer yes;" and from this she will not go, although Humphrey chides her, and Mrs. Banks joins her entreaties to those of her son.

It is autumn now, and whilst the long hours drag out their weary lengths, a strange and intangible barrier rises between Stuart and Molly. Neither of them can define it, Molly cannot give it a name; but there it is, and it can never be wholly swept away.

Gay she is of manner, and yet Mercy, who loves her well, sees the change in her and grows fearful. Often she prays,—

"Heaven keep her glad! Heaven grant her life may never be shadowed as mine!" and in all, through all, she endeavours to make the child's way lie in pleasant paths.

She herself is not strong or well. Long hours at her desk, long companionship with her husband, do not conduce to good health; but not a word of complaint does she utter.

Only as her cheeks grow paler, and her lovely eyes more languid, Molly hovers about her with tender care; even dares to invade her brother's study and upbraid him for his want of thought.

Autumn passes, winter comes and goes, and to Stuart's urgent entreaties Molly answers always,—

"I will marry you when I have grown older and wiser," for the cloud, nobigger than a man's hand at first, has overspread the sky of her little world.

"You do not love me," he answers, half in anger, half in sorrow, and she, with face averted, replies,—

"Yes, I love you; you must never doubt that, but I have reasons for acting as I am now doing. One day I may give them you; when I am your wife there must be no secret between us."

And still as the days go on and the beauti-

ful spring gladdens all the earth, the change in her grows more and more apparent, until even Humphrey says,—

"Molly is growing sedate. I suppose she will soon appoint her wedding-day; and when once she is gone from us we shall have more time for work. I notice she often distract your attention, Mercy, from your tasks."

The young wife, so beautiful, so lovable, so ready to give affection for affection, flashes one glance of reproach at him. He does not heed it. Then she says, slowly and significantly,—

"It will be a sad day for me when Molly leaves your house," she never by chance says ours. "She has been to me the kindest of friends and dearest of sisters," and she lays aside her pen.

The Professor breaks in swiftly,

"Try to forget, Molly, and attend to my requirements. Are you ready?"

"No," says Mercy, for the first time rebellious, "I can write no more. My hand is cramped, and my brain seems on fire. You must excuse me;" and not waiting his reply she goes out into the starry loveliness of an April night, never guessing that in this hour her fate and Molly's will be irrevocably sealed. She leans upon the gate, moaning like a hurt thing, "My head! my head! will it never cease to ache and throb? Has he not the least instinct of compassion? Oh, Heaven, I wish that I were dead!"

And Molly hearing those words, for she too had strayed into the garden, would have hastened to comfort her, but that a voice well-known and all too dearly loved, cries,—

"Mercy! Mercy! what new unhappiness has come to you?"

"Go away," says the wretched wife. "Why do you come here to witness my misery? It is not new, it is as old as my marriage. Stuart, I cannot live with him longer. He starves me of love. I am dying of my hunger—and oh! Heaven forgive me, I am learning to loathe him. I cannot stay here. I must go away."

"He is your husband. What can you do? Oh, Mercy, my old love, what can you do?"

And there stands Molly, his new love, with hands locked close over her heart, listening to the death-knell of her joyous hopes.

## CHAPTER V.

"WHAT can a woman do?" questions Mercy, bitterly. "Nothing but endure her lot as best she may; but it has been in my mind many a day to leave him. But then, where am I to go? I have no friends; and again, I would not hurt dear Molly. She has been an angel to me. Stuart! Stuart! she is more worthy of you than ever I was! I was a better woman in the old days than now, but never like her, never like her!"

The listening girl blesses her for these words, although her heart is riven with anguish, and, hardly knowing what she does, waits for Stuart's reply. It comes slowly and heavily,—

"Molly is one of the dearest little souls under the sun; but she is not you. Oh! Mercy, how happy we might have been! How cruelly my pride and anger have wrecked our lives. Forgive me, if you can—I cannot forgive myself; and for your own sake, my poor, lost love, try to endure your lot a little longer. There must be a brighter time coming for you. Surely your life cannot be all darkness?"

"There is a brighter time coming," echoes Molly, in her heavy heart. "But when, when? Will it always be so cruel as now—this pain I bear?"

"I will try to believe your words," Mercy says, drearily, "and I would do so much for little Molly; but I think my heart will break."

"Mine is broken!" whispers the wretched

listener. "Mine is broken! But, oh! for your love and kindness I bless and thank you."

"You are a brave woman and true, Mercy," Stuart says. "You will do your duty, and with Heaven's help we may yet forget all that might have been and now can never be. You owe something to your husband. You owe much to Molly, and so let us guard our secret religiously."

And what more he says that poor child does not hear. She is on her knees praying with all her broken heart that strength may be given her to hide the wound she bears, to hold silence until the way she must tread may be made plain before her. And all the while she prays and blesses these two who have loved so well and so long, and is grateful to them for their faith to her, though they have robbed her life of joy.

There is nothing of selfishness in the child's nature; in the brief years of her life all unconsciously she has sacrificed herself and her wishes to minister to the happiness of others. Now she prays that in some way, no matter how hard it may be for herself, these two dear ones may find happiness again.

She does not know or guess how this may be; she has not even any thought of going to Stuart with the words, "I have learned your secret and so I set you free!" but all the while she resolves that never, never will she be his wife; and when the fitting time arrives she will give him back his freedom, and she will try to find her consolation in his grateful friendship. But it is a very changed Molly that goes down to breakfast that next morning; her pretty cheeks are pale, and her eyes are heavy. She has a headache, she says in answer to Mercy's anxious inquiry, "a walk will cure it;" but she speaks with a listlessness wholly new to her, and all her movements are languid.

"I don't believe Molly is well," Mercy says to Humphrey when they are alone; "don't you think it would be well to consult Dr. Dysart?"

"Molly is well enough, nothing ails her but indolence. Let me see, where were we—oh!—go on if you please, time is fame and money;" and all through the long, sunny morning the white slave toils for her master with a heart full of hot revolt, and lips set in a hard line. Outside she hears the sounds so ripe on a bright spring day; the twitter of newly-mated birds, the irritating cooing of the pigeons, and lastly Stuart's voice speaking to Molly, who answers in such low, faint tones that her words are not audible to Mercy.

"What ails you, Molly, dear?" the young man asks, tenderly—all the more tenderly because he feels he has failed in allegiance to her.

"Nothing," answers the sweet young voice, with a thrill of weary pain running through it. "I did not sleep well; but as the day wears by I shall be my old self."

Oh, never any more! Not this day or in any day to come!

How she endures his kindness and his endearments she does not know, and when he presses her to fix their wedding-day she is fain to cry on him to cease. Yet she honours and loves him but the more that he is willing to go through with the sacrifice.

"Not yet," she says, firmly, "not yet, Stuart; wait until Mercy is happier. I help her a little I think; I could not do so if I were away."

"But, Molly, won't you consider my happiness, and how much my mother desires her daughter's constant presence?"

"I am thinking always of your happiness," earnestly, "and I know it will be wiser for us to wait a little longer yet; and it does not need that I should make haste to wear your name in order to love your mother."

And so from day to day she put him off; from day to day the change in her grows more apparent. She is neither paler nor thinner, but her eyes are always weary and the curve of the mouth is very sad, the light ripple of

her happy laughter no more makes music in the old sunny rooms, and her joys have become things of the past. But in all, through all, her tenderness to Mercy is unceasing. Towards Mrs. Banks she is as lovingly attentive as in earlier and happier days, but the lady feels that something has happened to her darling which has robbed the young life of its brief, bright glory; and Stuart is dimly conscious that all is not as it should be with the girl.

"Have you and Molly quarrelled?" the mother asks anxiously of the son.

He laughs a little.

"Quarrelled! Why, Molly could not do such a thing if she tried; she is peace itself. Why do you ask?"

"Because the child is changed. I cannot see her face, it is true, but I can hear her voice, and it has lost all its old ring of gladness; her step is slower, and she never laughs now. The child is wretched—make haste to bring her home."

"She will not come yet, mother; sometimes I have thought lately our engagement has not fulfilled her hopes, and she would like to be free again."

"There you are wrong," Mrs. Banks says hastily. "Molly is not one lightly to change in her affections. I know she loves you as well as ever she did. My boy! my boy! do not tell me that the fault is yours? That you still remember and long for the girl I never knew—that she is more to you than your promised wife."

Stuart is silent a moment, and then, partly because his mother is very dear to him, partly because it is a relief to open his heart, he says—

"You have guessed the truth, and yet not all of the truth. I do think more than I should of one it is my bounden duty to forget, because to remember her is now a sin. The girl I loved with all my strength is Humphrey Rygate's wife; but Molly does not know it, and she never must."

"Stuart! Stuart! this is worse than I supposed or dreamed; and in some way I am afraid the child has learned the truth, but loves you too dearly to be able to give you your freedom."

"She cannot possibly know it; Mercy would tell her nothing, and they are the closest of friends and sisters. If Molly is unhappy, it is on Mercy's account. There are moments when I could kill that scintillant brother of hers for his callousness."

"You must not go to Sunnyside so often," Mrs. Banks says, after a sad pause; "you owe it to Molly to forget the past. You can not do that if you see Mrs. Rygate often. My poor boy! my poor little Molly!"

"I will atone for all my fault, mother, by added kindness to her. With Heaven's help, I will never give her an unkind look or a harsh word, and perhaps—who can tell?—all will come right in the end."

"And Heaven grant it may be so."

That same day, Molly goes to the Grove, when she is quite certain she runs no risk of meeting Stuart. These daily meetings with him are almost more than she can bear. And sitting in her favourite position at Mrs. Banks' feet, reads to her in her low, sweet voice; and the elder woman hearing that undercurrent of pain in it, prays silently that life may yet be made glad again for her. Gentle as she is, she almost hates Mercy for standing in her darling's place.

And Molly reads,—

"All love, are loved, save only I; their hearts Beat warm with love and joy, beat full thereof. They cannot guess who play the pleasant parts, My heart is breaking for a little love."

She catches her breath sharply; then, as it resolved to torture herself into the courage and strength of despair, she reads to the close of the verse, all through the next; and with just the smallest pause, again takes up the ballad.—

"Perhaps some saints in glory guess the truth,  
Perhaps some angels read it as they move,  
And cry one to another full of ruth,  
Her heart is breaking for a little love."

Then, all in a moment, the sweet voice falters and breaks. She can go no farther, but with outstretched arms, and face hidden in her friend's skirts, bursts into passionate tears and sobs.

"Oh, Molly! my little daughter, what is it? I have never seen you like this. Cannot you confide in me? Perhaps I can help you in your trouble."

"No one can help me, no one, no one!" cries the poor child, wildly. "My trouble is beyond remedy, and beyond relief. Let me cry a little—here, with my face hidden—I shall be stronger soon." And shortly she looks up bravely, smiling through her tears. "How silly I have been, how cruel I am to frighten you so needlessly. I suppose I was just a trifle unnerved by something that happened to me a short while since, but it is over now, and 'Molly is herself again.'

But Mrs. Banks cannot believe this, and, at the first opportunity, opens her mind to Stuart on the subject; and he being full of self-reproach, and of pity for his little sweet-heart, asks, anxiously,

"Is it any fault of mine that is making you unhappy, dear?"

"It is no fault of yours," she answers, gently; "and with my tears, half my grief was washed away. You are always good to me, Stuart."

And now the summer comes with its wealth of flowers, its smiling waters, and shining skies, and the world is so fair that even Molly's sad young heart is lifted from its sadness, so that she bears some faint resemblance to the girl whose brightness had been a constant source of annoyance to the Professor, and even Mrs. Banks hoped that the cloud is passing from her life; but with the summer trouble comes to Delcombe, than which, despite its beauty, there can be no more unsanitary place, and the trouble comes in the form of fever.

The first few cases cause little or no alarm; but when one after another is smitten down, too many never to rise again, a perfect panic possesses the people, and all who are able leave the place until the plague shall be stayed. Stuart goes to the Professor.

"I am not alarmed for myself," he says, quietly; "but my mother is nervous, and I have Molly to think of. You will not keep your women folk here at the risk of their lives?"

Humphrey looks up with an ill-concealed sneer.

"I am not afraid, neither are they. The place is quiet; I can better pursue my researches at home than elsewhere. No; decidedly Mercy and I remain. Molly may please herself."

"Is there anything human in you at all?" asks Stuart, in a state of fury. "Don't you care if harm comes to your wife?"

Humphrey smiles contemptuously.

"I am not in the habit of meeting troubles half way, and to my wife my will is law."

And then what more dare Stuart say in behalf of the woman he loves? It is all that he, with Mrs. Banks and Mercy to help him, can do to persuade Molly to go with them from Delcombe.

"I would rather stay," she says, earnestly; but Mercy cries, quickly,—

"No, no, dear sister, you shall run no risk. I am not afraid, and, if trouble comes, you shall not be left in ignorance. Go, little one, it is your joy and your duty alike to consider your lover."

So Molly goes all reluctantly, and the house is a melancholy place to Mercy without her; for if the girl has lost her brightness, her tender ways and unfailing sweetness have given the poor wife the only consolation she dare ask or hope for.

There comes a day when the simple people whisper that the "Great Professor" is ill; it is surely the fever which holds him in its grip,

if one may believe the frightened servants. At first he keeps obstinately about his work. The world would come to an end prematurely if he neglected that; but the fever is too strong for him.

"I will lie down," he says to Mercy, "wake me at five precisely. I have so much to do, and life is all too precious to waste one single moment of it."

"Let me send for Doctor Dysart," Mercy urges. "Do not say no, Humphrey."

"I am not ill; only tired. The foolish gossip of the servants has alarmed you," and then he goes to his room; but in the evening he cannot rise, and his wife despatches a servant for the medical man.

"Fever," he says, "and in its worst form. Get a nurse, and if you are afraid of infection don't return to his room."

"I am his wife!" and with these few words she returns to the sick-room.

Before the next morning he is delirious, and a telegram is sent to Molly:

"Humphrey down with fever, don't return. Will wire you later."

But when the girl receives the telegram, she rushes down to Mrs. Banks and Stuart.

"I must go!" she cries, "Humphrey has the fever. My heart reproaches me now that I have loved him so little, for," with an awestricken look, "he may never rise again. When can I go, Stuart? Oh, help me, please!"

"Try to be calm, Molly darling. I will take you back as soon as possible."

"No, no! I can go alone. You must run no risk, for mother's sake." It struck Mrs. Banks as significant that she did not say "for my sake" "I cannot leave Mercy alone in her anxiety."

"Then we all will go," the lady breaks in with more decision than she is wont to display. "Your danger shall be ours, my dearest child, and our help yours. Stuart, please make all necessary arrangements at once."

That very evening the small party travels down to Delcombe, and Mercy meets her sister with loving remonstrances and tears of gratitude.

These two, drawn together by ties which one does not suspect, share the long night watches, and all the multitudinous duties attending the nursing profession.

But morning finds no change in Humphrey's condition, and in this wise another day wears slowly to its close, only to be followed by others equally anxious. Then the change comes.

"You must prepare for the worst," says Dr. Dysart, "I dare not bid you hope."

The Professor's eyes, wide and conscious, are fixed upon his face.

"Thank you. Will you send for Webb, Mercy? He is the nearest lawyer, and I wish to make my will. Don't cry; your tears cannot save me."

Calmly and clearly he states his last wishes. All his writings, all his scientific treasures are to go to a neighboring museum, his little fortune he bequeaths to his wife "as a mark of the esteem he has for her talents," he does not say love, and his last work on earth being ended, he quietly passes away—unregretted, unloved, unlaughed; for not even those to whom he was nearest, and might have been dearest, could remember one act of his that did not savour of selfishness. He had craved nothing all his life but glory, and now even this was denied him.

But Molly wept with Mercy to think they had no love to give him, no wild regret because he was dead.

That last night he lies in the old house Molly goes all alone to his room.

"You live," she says, a sob catching her breath; "it ought to have been me! You wanted to live, and I long only for death. When will it come? when will it come? Mercy is free now, and he loves her."

She kisses those cold lips once—in life they

had rarely touched her own—and then she leaves him to his last long sleep.

Next day they bury him, and sister and wife sit alone throughout the long hours which follow; but in the morning Molly cannot rise. Her head throbs and burns, her pulses beat high, and every limb aches with intolerable pain.

"The fever has come to me too," she says to herself. "Oh, I hope that I may die, and then all will be well! all will be well!"

#### CHAPTER VI.

From the first there is no hope for her, although Dr. Dysart cannot find it in his heart to tell this to those who love her so fondly.

She lies delirious, sometimes murmuring out her griefs, until Mercy and Stuart learn all the truth, and regard each other as guilty things—sometimes chanting words of poems she has loved and been wont to read; and they scarce can listen for the choking sobs which may not wholly be repressed.

This, then, has been the cause of the change in her, and yet she has been strong to hold her peace and spare them pain. She has had no rath upon herself, no blame for those who all unwittingly have marred her brief, bright life.

"He does not love me any more," she laments throughout the long hours. He has never loved me. It is Mercy who holds his heart, and I—I am alone for ever. When will it end? When shall I forget my pain? Stuart! Stuart! Stuart!" in piercing tones, "my heart is breaking for a little love;" and Mrs. Banks, who sits beside her, suddenly buries her face among the pillows close by the flaxen head, crying out,—

"This is too cruel. I cannot bear it! Oh, Heaven, have mercy on us all!"

The sweet, wild voice rings out once more, this time in song:

"I walked in the garden of roses with thee,  
In the garden where never again we shall be.

And Stuart, falling on his knees, that he may bring his face on a level with hers, pleads—

"Molly! Molly, darling! can't you hear me; can't you understand that I love you very dearly indeed, my poor little sweet-heart?"

But his words fall only on deaf ears. She is still rambling on; but now she talks of her earlier and happier days, and sometimes a low laugh lifts her white throat, and her lips part in a smile more cruel than any tears could be to those who watch beside her.

Three days she lies thus; then the change comes. Dr. Dysart is with her when she opens her eyes consciously.

"I am going to die," she says, simply. "Heaven is very good to me!"

Mercy covers her face with her hands, whilst Stuart cries, sharply,—

"Doctor, do not say it is so," for he feels in this moment as though he were that poor child's murderer, "she is so young!"

"Death is no respecter of age," the doctor answers, pitifully.

He has known Molly all her life, and she has always been a special favourite with him.

"I have done all I can for Miss Rygate; but she is beyond mortal skill!"

The girl turns her face towards him; there is a smile upon her lips, and a great light in her deep blue eyes.

"How long?" she questions, "how long?"

"I cannot say. It may be days, it may be only hours!"

"Then, if you please, I will do what there is left me to do. I must not lose one moment, seeing the end may come so quickly."

It is curious to notice how collected she is, and how strong her voice has grown. One less wise than Dr. Dysart might well believe her on the high road to recovery; but he knows this is the last flicker of the expiring lamp.

And when he is gone she insists upon sitting up amidst her pillows, whilst Stuart supports her, and Mercy kneels weeping at the foot of the bed. Mrs. Banks holds one little hand in hers, but now she does not shed a tear.

"Do not grieve so bitterly for me," says Molly. "I am quite happy to go. Life is not kind to most of us. It might not have been kind to me; and so death is best. When I am gone you will think a little fondly of me, and forgive all my faults and follies!"

"Molly! oh, Molly! for Heaven's sake do not reproach me so bitterly," cries Stuart, in agonised tones; "if I could keep you here, do not you believe I would?"

"Yes, because you are loyal and true, dear Stuart, and you would keep your word to me even if you broke your own heart and Mercy's. Hush, you must let me speak now, because my time is nearly spent, and silence is good no longer. You could not know or guess what had so changed me, but I will tell you all the truth now; and remember, oh! remember that you and Mercy have no cause to reproach yourselves.

"It was on that night when Mercy's strength had broken down that I heard you at the gate, and I tried to go away but could not. I seemed frozen where I stood. And when I heard all the kind words you spoke of me, all your resolves never to wound me, I prayed that the way to your happiness might be made plain, and see how graciously Heaven has answered my prayer!

"It is better I should go, for, knowing all the truth, I never could have let you sacrifice yourself to me, and yet—oh! how cruel I was! I could not of my own will set you free. But now, my dear love! my dear love! you are no longer bound. You did not love me ever, although you deceived yourself into the belief that I was all the world to you; but now, so long as you live, you will think kindly of me and pitifully; and soon, oh, yes! very soon you will be happy as even I can wish you!"

And then at her sweet unselfishness the man's heart within him melts; and bursting into tears, he hides his tortured face. A pained look leaps into her eyes.

"Oh, you must not! you must not! It hurts me to see you sorry. And why should you grieve that I go when all good things lie before you? And there is Mercy—poor Mercy! Come nearer to me. You have been a sweet and dear sister to me. Be near me to the last. Stuart, can you listen to me now, dear? I have something to say."

She pauses until some semblance of control returns to him, until Mercy has moved to the head of the bed, then in a voice grown very faint, she says,—

"Let me keep him to the end; that will come so soon, and you love me too well to refuse me any boon I ask. But in due time, when I am gone away, when Humphrey's memory has grown faint, promise me that you two will marry, and never, never let doubt or anger come between you any more."

"Do not speak of these things now," says Stuart, whilst Mercy trembles, and grows white as the dying girl; but Molly answers, firmly,—

"Promise."

And what can they do but obey? Then, and then only, is she content; and, her little strength being exhausted, she lies back with closed eyes and parted lips, her breath coming and going so faintly that at times they fear all is over.

All through the day she sleeps fitfully, and speaks no other word. She is sinking fast, and Mercy kneeling beside her weeps like one distraught. In the early morning of a new day she opens her eyes.

"On," she says, "how weary you are looking, Mercy. How cruel I have been to keep you here! but your task will soon be ended."

"Stay with us," sobs Mercy, "stay with us, Molly. You have been an angel in the house."

The dying hands steal out to meet the warm living ones.

"Dear Mercy!" but she can say no more. Still later, when the sands of her life are sinking very low, she turns to Mrs. Banks.

"Mother! mother! let Mercy take my place in your heart. Stuart, kiss me now; later, I may not know you." And then they wait in heart-broken silence for the end.

It comes at sunset, and she has spoken no more through all those long golden hours. Now suddenly she lifts herself erect; there is an ecstatic look on her young, pure face.

"Home!" she whispers, "Home! AT LAST!" and, falling back, speaks no more on earth. \*

At dead of night a white haggard-faced man enters that silent room, lit only by the level beams of the summer moon; and drawing up the blinds, reverently turns down the sheet to look at the sweet, dead face below.

There is a holy calm upon it; a smile yet hovers about the pale, silent lips. Death had been kind: he had not touched the loveliness of youth to mar it.

With a cry of bitter remorse Stuart bends over the white bed, lays his lips to those that may never more respond to his caresses; and surely it is no shame to his manhood that his eyes are blinded with tears, and his features blurred.

Was not Molly the sweetest, dearest little soul on earth? and if he had not taken her life, had he not broken her innocent heart, and was that not infinitely worse?

They bury her without pomp or ceremony, had she not hated both? but the little chuchyard is crowded with high and low—all come to do her this last sad honour. Was there one in Delcombe who could resist her kindness and her beauty? Was there one who could remember any harsh word she had uttered, any cruel thing she had done in all her brief life?

As he reads the last solemn words of our divine burial service, the clergyman's voice falters, and there is scarcely one present who is not moved to tears. And so she passes away from the glad, bright world, and Stuart, feeling that life will be insupportable at Delcombe, both for himself and his mother, disposes of the Grove as quickly as possible, and with considerable loss to himself, and goes abroad.

But Molly remains at Sunnyside, to dream and dream, to long for the sound of Molly's voice and the sight of that sweet face hidden by the cruel mould. But Molly is sleeping quietly, and in silence and sorrow Molly's days wore by.

This all happened eighteen months ago, and now with glad hope in his heart, though indeed the dead girl is not forgotten, Stuart returns to Delcombe, there again to woo his first love; and this time no cloud arises to mar their happiness or destroy their mutual faith.

A quiet wedding follows; Sunnyside is sold, and Stuart takes his bride to a place less fraught to her with sad memories. And as the years pass by, children come to bless them and brighten still more their bright home; to look with reverence and love on "Aunt Molly's picture," to listen to "grandma's" stories of her pretty ways and kindly heart; for though Mrs. Banks has received Molly into her affections, she never can fill Molly's place there. Nor does she wish to supplant her; she holds her memory too dear. And the green grave at Delcombe is never forgotten; all the year through it is bright with flowers; and on one day in each season, if you care to look towards the quiet chuchyard, you will see husband and wife, hand locked in hand, paying loving tribute to the memory of the sweetest, purest little soul that ever lived and loved.

[THE END.]

## AN EVIL DEED.

## CHAPTER XXII.—(continued)

"On, go, Guy!" whispered Barbara; "a storm is coming on, and you have such a walk! Besides, how awful if Mr. Glaister caught you!"

"I shouldn't mind," was Guy's reckless answer. "I'd like to stay here another hour or two."

"But your father," remonstrated the child, pulling away her hands, "he may get cold."

Guy laughed unfeeling.

"Not he, darling! He's camped out many a time on a colder night. Well," noticing the distressed look in her blue eyes, "I'll go if you wish it. Give me one more kiss and I'll be content."

She gave in, but he was not by any means content with one; more and more he demanded until a warning "Cooee" sounding on the still air made Barbara desperate.

"If you don't go I'll never speak to you again!"

This awful threat had the desired effect. He snatched one last hasty kiss, sprang from the barrow, and vanished into the gathering darkness.

"Not a minute too soon, either," thought Barbara, with beating heart; for scarcely could they have reached the little gate ere the sound of carriage wheels broke upon her ear, coming nearer and nearer. Mr. Glaister had returned!

She listened breathlessly, and noticed in some surprise that the wheels, instead of stopping at the front of the house, went on along the soft gravel walk and rattled at last over the sharp stones of the old courtyard.

"Why is that, I wonder?" mused the girl. "No carriage has ever gone in that way since we came. What are they going to do?"

A queer foreboding crept into her young heart. She had always regarded Mr. Glaister's actions with suspicion; hating and despising the man she could imagine no good of him, but was rather prone to attach a frightened importance to his simplest words and deeds.

She paced up and down her room, her heart beating, her face flushed and excited. How forlorn she felt, all alone in this gruesome house with that strange man and woman!

She longed for the presence of the brave, true men who had just left her. If they were only by her side, how confident she should feel! The sudden turning of the key in the lock dragged her thoughts back to the present.

Mrs. Bartram came in with the supper-tray and addressed her sharply.

"Eat your supper quickly," she said. "Your mother is going away, and you are to come and say good-bye to her."

"Going away!" stammered the girl. "Why?"

"Because she needs a change. Your father has brought a clever doctor down with him, and he orders change of air, so she's to go back with him to his house to-night. He will not take her by railway, and they have a long way to go, so they leave here in an hour's time."

Barbara felt more frightened than ever. Why did Mrs. Bartram—who was so usually so taciturn—take the trouble to explain all this to her?

"I shall be ready soon," was all she said, and was glad to see the grim creature disappear without another word.

Too excited to eat, she leaned back in her chair, and tried to decide what this sudden move meant. But her brain was in such a whirl, her heart was beating so madly, she felt so lonely and deserted, that she gave up the effort, and waited tremblingly for Mrs. Bartram's return.

"Are you ready?" said the woman, appear-

ing suddenly again, and glancing in a pleased manner at the girl's excited face.

In silence Barbara rose and followed her to the invalid's dismal rooms. Through the heavy door they passed and stood in the presence of the poor mute woman.

She sat in her usual arm-chair, dressed ready for the journey. A heavy black cloak hid the emaciated figure. A close bonnet almost concealed the wistful melancholy face.

Mr. Glaister came forward on their entrance, and laid a cold, firm hand on Barbara's.

"My daughter," he said, in significant tones, glancing at a man standing by the window.

Looking up, Barbara saw a short, powerfully-built man, dressed in a heavy mister, and carrying a sturdy walking-stick.

She shuddered a little when she saw the coarse red face, small sharp grey eyes, and thin cruel lips; but she said nothing.

"Dr. Bonner, Barbara, who is kindly taking charge of your poor mad mother," explained Glaister, calmly.

The doctor advanced, and took her hand in his, gazing at her with an odious expression of admiration.

"Yes," he sighed, "the poor lady is very ill indeed!" With a gesture of disgust, which was not lost upon the doctor, Barbara snatched her hand away and flew over to the invalid.

"She is not mad now!" she gasped out. "She shall not go away with you!"

Dr. Bonner shrugged his shoulders, and a quick glance passed between him and Glaister,

"Your daughter is excited!" he said; "but taking into consideration the fact that madness is hereditary, it is not to be wondered at."

Barbara's heart was chilled by his quiet significant speech.

"Do you mean I am mad?" she cried, while the poor invalid looked wistfully from one to the other.

"I mean that if you are not very careful you may become so," he replied, brusquely.

With frightened, anguished eyes she gazed around; but the hard, cruel faces seemed only to force upon her the knowledge of her awful danger.

"Guy!" she called out, suddenly. "Oh, come to me, and save me!"

Then, with a little quivering sigh, fell back unconscious.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A DISMAL FAILURE.

A DREADFUL thunderstorm raged that night over the sweet Devon moors. The rain fell in torrents, great gusts of wind swept over and around the Tors, the vivid lightning lit up the deep, dark valleys, and struck the head of many a stately tree. And yet with morning all was peaceful again. A cool, fresh breeze blew across the spreading moorland, a breeze fully appreciated by the two Bouveries as they strode rapidly on their way to Mr. Glaister's.

In the bright light of morning Guy looked pale and careworn. He had lain awake all night, listening to the heavy peals of thunder and thinking uneasily of Barbara's unprotected state.

"The thunder affected you, lad," said his father bluntly, when Guy mentioned his fears. "The child will be quite safe with us to look after her."

"We must be very firm with him, dad!" cried Guy, eagerly, when once again they stood waiting for the opening of the massive door.

"Like a rock," came the prompt answer; then the door swung open, and Mrs. Bartram faced them.

"The master's ready to see you," she said, stiffly, in answer to Bouvierie's inquiry. "Come this way."

In the great hall they crossed on their way to Mr. Glaister's study stood two or three heavy packing cases, while straw was littered

all around them, and these evident signs of removal catching Bouvierie's quick eyes he stopped, and pointed to them.

"Is your master leaving?" he asked, abruptly.

She smiled insolently.

"Better ask him; I'm sure he'll be delighted to tell you all his arrangements," she sneered, throwing open the door of the study, and announcing them in loud tones.

"Really, sir!" exclaimed Bouvierie, hotly, as Mr. Glaister came forward, newspaper in hand, a polite smile on his calm, inscrutable face, "your woman is excessively insolent!"

"Is she?" carelessly: "she suits me."

Bouvierie frowned and clenched his hands. This smug-faced smiling man annoyed him greatly; he felt too angry to speak.

"May I inquire the reason of this attention on your part, gentlemen?" asked Glaister.

At that Guy advanced, and in a few caustic, manly words, laid his proposal before him. Mr. Glaister kept his eyes fixed on the ground while the young man was speaking; but when he paused for a reply, took out a penknife, and began deliberately to cut his nails.

"What you ask is impossible," he said, slowly; "besides, Miss Glaister has gone away."

Guy started forward.

"That is false! she could not!" he stammered, unheeding a warning touch from his father.

Mr. Glaister raised his eyebrows.

"Why not?" he sneered.

"Because," cried Guy, casting pendency to the winds, "we saw her as late as nine o'clock last night, and she had then no idea of leaving home."

"So you sneaked up here in the dark, did you?" snarled Glaister, for a minute losing his temper. "An honourable proceeding, truly!"

"Oh! we didn't like coming in that way," remarked Bouvierie, bluntly; "but you would never have let us see her, and my boy was eager to assure the child of his love."

"How romantic!" laughed Mr. Glaister, quite cool and self-possessed again; "such devotion should meet with a proper reward. But, as I said, Miss Glaister has gone away, and I am dreadfully afraid you will never see her again. Stay!" waving Guy back, who had started forward fiercely. "I will tell you why. A celebrated mad-doctor came down with me last night, saw my wife, who has been in a very excited state lately, and pronounced her hopelessly mad, as her father had been before her. Barbara was called and acquainted with the sad truth. Firmly, but gently, I told the child how impossible it would be for her to think of marrying. She recognised the reason in my argument, and begged earnestly to be sent away somewhere for a time. The doctor had advised that my wife should be removed from here, I suggested that Barbara should go with her. The child, who is passionately attached to her poor mother, consented; they set off last night, driving all the way."

"Where have you sent her?" demanded Guy, hoarsely, while Bouvierie, who had listened eagerly, and was persuaded the tale was false, decided on a bold stroke.

"That I cannot say," replied Mr. Glaister, in tones of dignified melancholy; "I promised Barbara not to tell."

"But," said Bouvierie, fixing his eyes upon him, "the poor lady's condition cannot possibly affect the child, seeing she is no relation to her."

For one moment only Glaister paled, and the newspaper in his hand fell to the ground. To an uninterested onlooker he would have appeared as composed as ever, but Bouvierie's quick eye noted the involuntary confusion immediately.

"What d'you mean, sir?" said Glaister, slowly, stooping to pick up the paper, while Guy, who also had remarked his pallor, waited eagerly for his father's next words.

"I mean," coolly, "that the poor lady was

not Barbara's mother; that you are not her father!"

Glaister was on guard now.

"Who told you that?" he said, coldly.

"The lady told Barbara herself," was the steady answer.

Then Glaister made a false move.

"She could not!" he cried, triumphantly; "she is dumb!"

"Then why have you said otherwise up to now?" asked Bouverie, quick as lightning.

Glaister bit his lip, but answered readily enough.

"Because I did not wish people to know how much she was afflicted."

"Humph!" growled Bouverie, unbelievably. "The fact still remains. The poor thing gave Barbara a scrap of paper, on which she had written these words: 'I am not your mother, he is not your father.' What d'you say to that, sir?"

"That is the form her madness takes, to repudiate her nearest and dearest," said Glaister, quickly.

"I don't believe it!" shouted out Guy, his patience at an end. "She is not your child, and we will prove it!"

"Yes, by Heaven we will!" added his father, enraged by the sneer on Glaister's face.

"Well, prove it," remarked that gentleman, tauntingly. "I am quite willing. But I tell you this, my fine sirs," his face darkening,

"the girl is my daughter, and you will never prove it otherwise. Do your worst! I would die rather than see her that young puppy's wife—understand that!"

His sneering, bitter words, his insolent expression as he folded his arms and looked at them defiantly, reused a very devil in Guy's aching, disappointed heart.

With a deep curse, he sprang forward and felled him to the ground; and there the mean-looking wretch lay writhing in impotent rage.

"A good hit out, that!" shouted Bouverie, beaming. "Come away now, lad, and let's begin our work."

Whereupon Guy, a little calmed down now, and quite satisfied that he had met Glaister's insulting words in the right way, followed his father readily from that house of ill omen.

"Confound the young jack-a-napes!" muttered Glaister, rising with difficulty, and rubbing his aching arm. "He shall smart for this! Get possession of the girl, will he? No, not if I have to put her out of the way altogether."

"What's the matter, Sam?" said a harsh voice behind him. "Have they gone?"

Smarting and full of impotent rage, he eagerly seized the opportunity to vent his malice on some one.

"He knocked me down! And 'tis all your work!" he growled, rushing at the astonished Mrs. Bartram and shaking her fiercely.

"Mine, Sam?" she faltered. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," shaking her again, "that while I've been away you've been drinking and leaving the girl alone with that dumb creature. Confess now."

"Only one hour, Sam," she pleaded, "only one hour!"

"Only one hour!" he sneered. "Just time enough for that mad thing to let her know she was not her mother—that I was not her father. I tell you, if I am ruined 'tis your fault. Why will you drink your senses away?"

"Because," she burst out, desperately, "'tis the only way to banish all the awful species that will rise before me. That girl long ago—the Australian's—"

"Hush!" he almost shrieked, glancing nervously over his shoulder. "Say no more!"

"You'll leave the country, Sam?" she said presently, watching him as he walked about.

"Yes, as soon as possible."

"And the girl?"

"I think I shall leave her behind. She'd only be troublesome. Once in Bonner's snug little place she'll be to all intents and pur-

poses—dead. Have you sent that idiot Betty away?"

"Yes," she said, quickly, anxious to please him; "this morning. And what about Ambrose, Sam dear? He's never come back."

"No, nor never will," he said, smiling grimly. "That nice, simple old man was a detective, dear!"

She started violently.

"Who'd set him on?"

"Don't know. That's what puzzles me. However, he won't trouble us again. I settled his business in London."

"Good Heavens!" muttered the woman in horrified tones. "Another spectre?"

"Pshaw!" he cried. "Stop that trash! Give me the key and I'll go and see that girl. If she's very docile we'll take her with us; if not, why Bonner shall have her. I can easily telegraph for him."

In silence she brought the required key, and he, taking it, bade her hurry with her preparations, and disappeared through a door and down a flight of steps leading to a number of rambling old cellars.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### IN DEADLY PERIL.

WHEN poor Barbara became once more conscious, after the hearing of those awful words had smitten her to the ground, she gazed around her in utter bewilderment.

She had fainted in the invalid's bedroom, but her eyes opened on a very different place. She found herself lying on a low couch in a gloomy cellar, lighted only by two tiny slits in the wall close to the ceiling. A solitary candle burned upon a little table beside her, on which was also placed a glass of milk and a plate of bread and butter.

The floor of the cellar was of stone; here and there a rug or two was thrown down, and she saw that a heavy wrap had been placed over her.

"Where am I?" the child wondered with a shiver. "What a horrible place!" staggering to her feet, for she was yet faint and giddy, and her head was throbbing painfully.

She tottered to the door and essayed to open it. It was locked and the key gone! She was indeed a prisoner!

"Mrs. Bartram has told all about Guy," she decided, pacing restlessly up and down, "and that man is angry. Oh!" throwing herself down with a piteous cry, "I wish I had not sent Guy away!"

She burst into a passion of tears, sobbing helplessly for some little time; but gradually her courage returned, and she began to look about her.

"I know now," she exclaimed suddenly, "why I am in one of the cellars. Oh, I must wait patiently, and try to make myself heard when they come to-morrow."

Buoyed up by this hope the little thing's heart grew light, for she was not given to repining, and possessed a decided tendency to look on the bright side of things.

Presently her eyes fell on the milk and bread-and-butter, and, remembering that she had eaten no supper, and that she would require all her strength for the morrow, she drew the glass and plate towards her and ate and drank eagerly.

For an hour or two she lay there quite content, her whole mind absorbed in sweet thoughts of her devoted young lover.

"To-morrow he will come," she thought, gladly, "and if Mr. Glaister does not listen to him he will not rest until he has taken me away from this horrible house. Oh! I wonder if that poor dumb creature has been carried off by that awful doctor. Odious man! How he lectured at me!"

Tired out with the exciting events of the evening she presently fell asleep, and never opened her eyes till morning, though the little mice came out in search of crumbs, and scampered softly under her couch; while the vivid

lightning flashed in at the small slits, illuminating the dark cellar, and seeming to linger on the sweet pale face and the mass of bright curly hair.

She awoke very early next morning, and lay for a few minutes watching the faint sun-rays that struggled for entrance at the tiny window.

Looking cautiously round her room, she jumped up with a sudden exclamation. Another table stood in a dark corner she had not noticed the night before, and on it were placed the appliances of the toilet.

"How nice! I can wash my face," cried Barbara, gladly. "I was feeling horridly dirty."

Into the cold fresh water she plunged her pretty face, and, seizing a great rough towel, rubbed away vigorously, emerging from the energetic scrubbing fresh and rosy.

Then she proceeded to re-arrange her bright curls, and, feeling satisfied that Guy and his father would not be quite horrified by her looks when they came, she sat down again and prepared to wait.

But the time crept on, and there was no sign of them. Had they forgotten her? she began to wonder, mournfully, and the next minute was indignant with herself for imagining such a thing. Why, how stupid of her! the cellars were at the back of the house. Even now they might be with Mr. Glaister. Any moment the summons to the study might come.

But no one came, and by-and-by the child's heart began to fail her. Many a dismal foreboding assailed her, banishing her courage and making her cower and pale at every sound.

On, yes, she thought, sadly, they must have come and gone by this. Her only friends had forsaken her, she was left to the tender mercies of Mr. Glaister and the housekeeper. Hark! what was that? A slow, heavy foot descending the steps leading to the door of her prison.

Starting up, she folded her arms resolutely, and waited tremblingly, yet with firm mien, for the appearance of her enemy.

The key turned harshly in the lock, the heavy door was pushed open, and Mr. Glaister entered and stood regarding her with a peculiar smile.

"Good morning," he said, politely. "Did you sleep well?"

"Yes," said the girl, quietly, "very well, though that is a matter for wonder in such a place as this."

"It was your own fault," was the gloomy answer. "If you'd not behaved in such a foolish, insane way last night, you'd be in your own comfortable bedroom now. Dr. Bonner advised a little solitary confinement, so—with a nasty smile—"I carried you down here."

Barbara, listening to his sinister words, felt her heart beat rapidly; but for all that she preserved a resolute brow, and answered him bravely.—

"I know your reason for bringing me here," she retorted. "You wanted to hide me away from my—my lover."

Mr. Glaister grew pale with anger as he watched the glorious blush that stole over her face as she concluded.

"How dare you call him that?" he snarled. "He is not, and never will be, your lover."

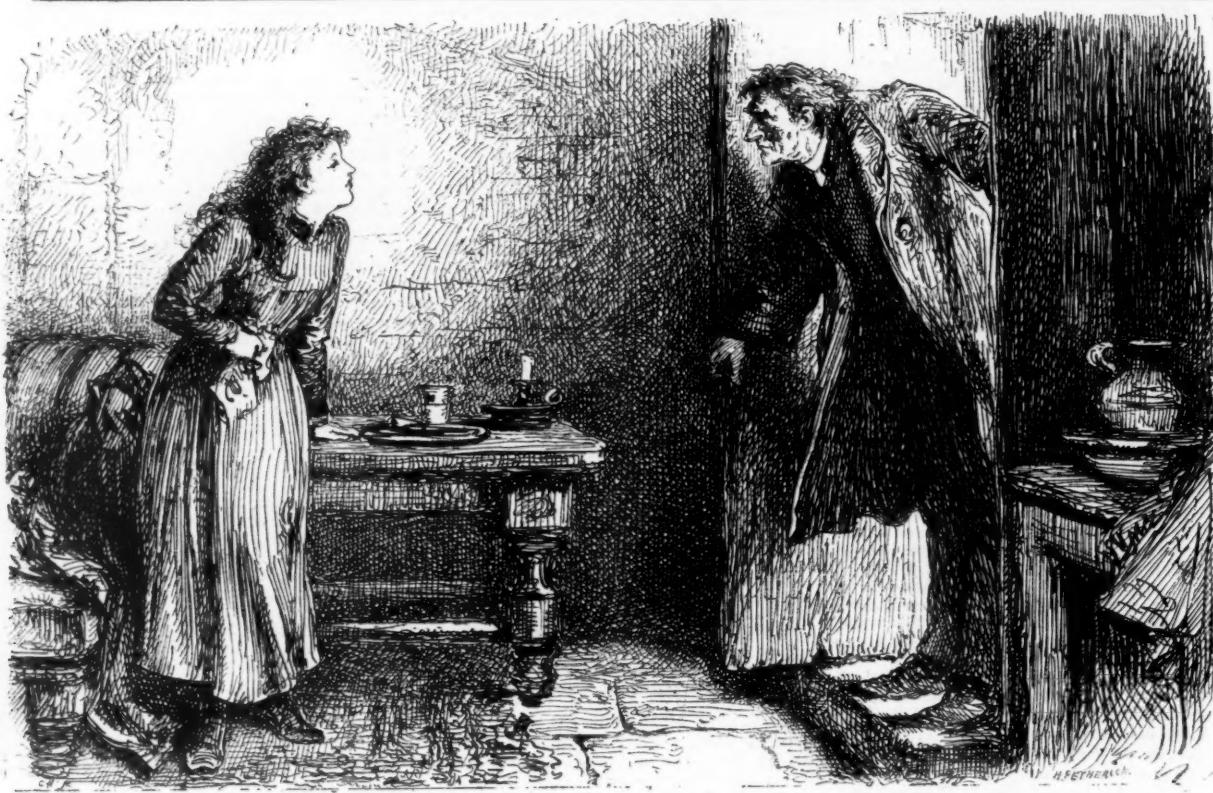
"He is my lover, and always will be," she said, coolly. "I will marry none other."

"You will not marry at all. He and his stupid old father have just left me, quite convinced of the folly of linking their good old name to that of one who must bear always the awful curse of insanity."

Barbara shivered, and shrank away, his cruel words failing on her ear in a dull, heavy way.

"No, no!" she cried, "I don't believe it!"

"Well, you needn't if you don't like," coolly; "but they are quite satisfied. When I



"I KNOW WHY YOU BROUGHT ME HERE," SAID BARBARA; "YOU WANTED TO HIDE ME AWAY FROM MY LOVER!"

had told them our family history, when they had heard that your mother's father died raving mad, they were only too eager to get away."

"She was not my mother!" cried the girl, desperately.

"Poon, she was. I hold all the certificates proving the fact. I tell you, your fine lover is quite convinced; so you had best submit, and listen to my proposal."

Utterly heart-broken, in her misery actually believing all he said, the poor, forlorn child dropped down on the couch, and put her hand wearily to her head.

"Go on," she said in dreary tones; and Glaister, with an expression of triumphant satisfaction, went on with what he wished to tell her.

"Your mother," he said, slowly, "is safely lodged in a lunatic asylum, and will be happier there than with us. I am tired of this stupid England! I long to get back to America, or—a little break in his voice,—Australia. I was there long ago when you were a tiny baby, and—liked the colonial life."

Barbara, looking at him as he spoke, noticed that a dull red stain had crept into his pale cheeks. He was gazing before him in a strange, peculiar way; but suddenly noticing that the girl's eyes were upon him, he drew back a little into the shade and went on rapidly,

"You and I and Mrs. Bartram will leave here at once, and start on our way to whichever portion of the globe I decide upon."

"No!" cried the child, suddenly, a mortal dread of him starting into her heart, while all at once her whole being was filled with shame at her easy belief in his tale of Guy's desertion. "I will not go. I so eminently believe that Guy will never give me up. I will not leave England. I will never forsake him!"

Glaister stood a minute as if turned to stone, glaring at her like some wild animal. Then, with one stride, he reached her and seized her by the wrist.

"You fool!" he hissed out. "I tell you this. I have sworn to them that you went away of your own free will last night, and they have hurried off to try and find you; but they never will!"

Barbara looked up joyfully.

In his fury he had made one slip. She knew now that Guy had not renounced her; but, with all the strength and courage of his loving heart, had gone forth to find her. And the knowledge filled her with a sweet content, and strengthened her for what lay before her.

"He is true to me," she said, quietly; but Glaister took no heed of her words.

"No one but myself and Mrs. Bartram knows that you are here," he went on, savagely. "The maid thought you went away last night; besides, she has been dismissed. You are alone with the man you scorn, and a woman who hates you bitterly. Be careful, my dear!"

"What would you have me do?" asked Barbara, bravely, though her heart sank as she spoke.

"Go away quietly with us to-morrow night, and never think of that smooth-faced boy again," he thundered out.

"I will not go with you; and I shall never cease to think of him!" came the brave reply.

"Then take the consequences," he yelled, shaking her to and fro like a slender reed.

"What are they?" she forced her trembling lips to ask, for she longed to know the worst.

"You will join your mother in her snug retreat," he said, sneeringly. "To-morrow you go to our good, kind Dr. Bonner."

"No, no!" she cried, in agonized tones, "I cannot!"

"You have brought it on yourself," he shouted, impatiently, and threw her violently from him.

Once again the horror of it all proved too

much for the child's strength. She fell back on the couch, and knew no more.

Mrs. Bartram stood at the top of the steps as the angry-faced man came up.

"Take down some food—quick!" he cried. "You can put it on the table while she is unconscious, and see you lock the door."

She turned away without a word, and, going swiftly about her task, was soon again beside him.

"Where are you going?" she ventured, seeing he had taken his hat and stick.

"To send a telegram to Bonner, and to see about the phaeton and furniture," he said, sharply.

"When do we leave here, Sam?" she asked, meekly, quite comprehending what had taken place in the cellar.

He paused and looked back.

"To-morrow night the house will be empty," he vowed, as he walked away.

"Good, good!" muttered the woman, rubbing her hands, "the saucy minx is well served!"

(To be continued.)

**E**VERYONE who has sat and shivered in an icy railway carriage during a long winter journey will feel that a debt of gratitude is due to the Midland Company for their "happy thought" of warming the compartments of their trains by means of hot-water pipes supplied from the engine.

The Chinese can remain in one position an indefinite time, have no consciousness of monotony, can do without exercise, are impervious to noise, can go to sleep at any time and in any attitude—all because they have no nerves. They cannot help taking things as they come. Curiously enough, this indifference is not associated with want of energy, for the Chinaman is exceptionally industrious. He is simply insensible to worry.



[ARLINE TURNED WHITE AS MARBLE AT THE DETECTIVE'S WORD; THE SHAFT HAD GONE HOME!]

## A LATE ATONEMENT.

### CHAPTER XIX.

HESTER DIXON had not received the hundred pounds she had named as the price of her secret. When she returned to Digby Place at the time she had appointed, Arline saw her and confessed, with considerable embarrassment, that she could not pay the money at present. She told Hester of the Squire's illness, giving it as the reason she was unable to ask him for money, and assured the woman it would very soon be forthcoming.

Hester, on her part, refused to speak without the reward. In vain Arline entreated her brain. She knew that Horace Clifton had cashed the cheque; but, while their nocturnal meetings were impossible, she could think of no way of getting her share of the booty. She took down Mrs. Dixon's address, and promised to communicate with her as soon as she was in a position to keep her part of the bargain.

"I shall go to your sister," said Hester, calmly; "she may be disposed to reap a rich reward for so small a stake."

"I don't expect Freda has a hundred shillings, much less a hundred pounds," said Arline, scornfully. "Years ago, when her husband died, she was living with her children in lodgings at Kennington; you need not expect to get any bribes from her, for even before his death Mr. Ross wrote to beg my father's charity for Freda and the twins."

Arline wrote to her husband constantly. Both were agreed that, for the present, meetings were impossible. With the doors locked every night at ten, and the keys in the Squire's own keeping, it was impossible for his daughter's midnight walks to be renewed. She was so well known in the neighbourhood of Digby End, that for her to attempt to hold a secret interview with anyone in the open air by daylight would have been useless. The

story would have gone the round of the whole parish, and perhaps reached her father's ears.

Day by day Dr. West looked graver, and Arline, who was a close observer, felt certain he was anxious about the Squire's state. The old man had made no will. Freda was only his stepdaughter. If he died intestate Arline as his only child would inherit everything, in spite of that fable he had invented of the Place not descending in the female line.

She had only to wait, to keep all report of her misdeeds, all suspicions of her true character, from Mr. Rushton, and when he died she would take possession of everything, and Digby would be—nowhere.

After Guy Cameron's visit the Squire seemed strangely restless and uneasy. Dr. West saw a great change in him when he called on the Saturday.

To his sympathizing ears the old man poured out the story of Digby's crime and cruel treachery. The simple country doctor was clearer in his judgment than the skilled detective—George Morton.

"I don't believe it," he said, promptly.

The Squire repeated the arguments. Dr. West kept his opinion.

"To begin with, your kinsman couldn't do such a thing. He was honest to the core, you could tell so much by just seeing him; then—what was his object?"

"Young men often get into debt."

"But Digby Rushton, as he told me himself, had just come into a legacy of a few hundred pounds, and as the heir of Digby Place he could easily have raised money. Men with such prospects, taking the world by side, and leaving his character out of the question, don't run the risk of penal servitude for a beggarly two hundred pounds."

The Squire looked half convinced.

"But it fitted in so with his not coming back at my request."

"Are you sure he had the letter?"

The old man winced.

"Arline wrote it in this very room."

"Miss Rushton does not like her cousin. Knowing your wish for a match between them, don't you think she may have fancied she should not care to have Digby Rushton in the house, to be practically tête à tête with him during your illness?"

"I don't think Arline would deceive me; but, Dr. West, I could die happy if I thought Digby was innocent. You can't tell what it has cost me to think the last of my race was a felon."

"I would stake my honour on Digby Rushton's!" cried the doctor, impulsively. "Besides, Squire, can't you see? He was the very person you might be supposed to give a handsome present to, that is why the forger made the cheque out to him and assumed his identity."

"And I've sent the sharpest detective in England after him," groaned the Squire. "If he is innocent the lad will never forgive me. Had I better telegraph to Morton not to go to Stingham?"

"No," said his friend quickly, "the matter had better be settled beyond dispute. There would be a doubt poisoning all your trust in your kinsman, if the faintest suspicion lingered in your mind. If the detective knows his work, he will see Digby Rushton can't be guilty. For the rest, in the young man's place I would far rather suffer a passing slight than lie under a perpetual sensation of distrust."

The Squire was silent for a few minutes.

"If I don't get better soon I must make my will. I've staved it off as long as I could, because I didn't want the whole world to know the skeleton in my closet."

"I cannot believe you have one; your life is open as the daylight. You are respected and esteemed by all."

James Rushton smiled feebly.

"You knew my wife, West, you were with her in her last illness. Surely you saw she

was not a happy woman. She was a widow when I married her, and I was jealous of her dead husband and of the child who resembled him. I turned the girl out of my house because she married a poor man. I would never let her mother mention her name. I left her to struggle on as best she could, a widow in poverty, and I am rightly rewarded. Arline, whom I loved as my own daughter, has deceived me. You were right, West : Clifton is in this neighbourhood and she has seen him !

"But Arline is your own child !"

"She is not. She was a mere baby of two or three when I married her mother, and I brought her up as my very own. Her real father never saw her, she was born a month after he left England !"

"But—"

"Oh, I know what you would say. The world has looked on Arline as my heiress. Well, up to a few days ago she would have been the heiress of all my savings, no mean sum; but if she has been encouraging Clifton all these years, she must be going to marry him, and I don't care for my money to go into his pocket, so—"

"You had better not trouble yourself about the future now," said Dr. West, kindly ; "get well first, and think of money matters afterwards."

"I must think now. West, you are a prudent man : do you feel sure Digby's staunch ?"

"So sure, Squire, that if he asked me for little Blanche—my only child, remember—he should have her, though he had nothing to offer but his strong, loving heart and good sound intellect."

"Then I shall make no will."

Dr. West stared.

"But Arline. Remember, Mr. Rushton, as she is no blood relation of yours the law will award her nothing if you die intestate."

"I know; but Digby is an honest man; tell him I wanted five hundred a-year settled on her, and the same on Freda Ross, if she can be found. He'll do it, and it'll save the worry of a will."

Although he was not easy about his patient, Dr. West expected no immediate danger. Ester, surely, that the master should wait than the poor Squire's feeble strength be taxed by legal consultations.

He said a word to Arline, as he was leaving, that he was not quite satisfied about her father. Mr. Rushton ought to be kept extremely quiet, and spared all discussions.

"It is this miserable business about Digby that has upset him !" said Arline, warmly. "You can't wonder at my father taking it to heart that he should be robbed by his own flesh and blood !"

Dr. West spoke no defence of young Rushton now. He distrusted Arline so intensely he would not let her see his opinion.

"Family troubles are always the worst to bear. Your father tells me he has not made his will. Unless he should grow rapidly worse, I see no immediate danger; the worry and fatigue of seeing his lawyer would try him greatly, so I am not sorry he seems disposed to postpone the business."

"Why should he trouble to make one at all ?" asked Arline. "He can surely trust his only child to carry out his wishes as scrupulously as though they were embodied in a legal document."

Dr. West went away, the doubt in his mind solved. Arline did not know she was only the Squire's stepdaughter.

Very early on Tuesday morning, before he received the detective's telegram, Dr. West was summoned to the Place. A change had taken place in the night, and the physician's experienced eye saw at once that his old friend's hours were numbered.

"Take this key," came from the old man's trembling lips. "In the first drawer of my writing-table you will find a sealed packet endorsed, 'About Nancy and her children.' I wish it to be in your keeping. Open it when

I am gone, it will show you what steps to take. I wish I could have seen Digby once again. Tell the lad I judged more clearly at the last, and I died trusting him. He must bring a wife home to the old place soon. Perhaps Heaven will grant him the children who were denied to me !"

It was all over. James Rushton lay dead. Arline had locked herself into her own room in real or pretended grief. The doctor addressed a parting charge to Mrs. Hobbs.

"If possible Mr. Digby Rushton will be here to-night. I shall telegraph for him at once. Remember he is sole master here now. You will see that his orders are carried out."

No word of the suspected forgery had been whispered to the servants. Mrs. Hobbs had no idea of the doubts once entertained by the Squire of his hair.

She promised obedience to the doctor's injunctions, and then he drove off to begin his neglected round of visits. He went to his own house first to see if any urgent summons had come, and there he found George Morton's telegram.

Five minutes after he heard for whom the passing bell was tolling, Digby Rushton was shaking hands with the kindly doctor.

There was much to say and hear. The detective explained the doubts they both entertained of Arline, Digby's complete innocence, and the clerk's theory that the real forger had been admitted to Digby Place on the night of the Squire's accident.

Dr. West, in his turn, told of the old Squire's death-bed message, and how with his last breath he had expressed his confidence in his heir.

"You ought to go to Digby Place at once, Mr. Rushton, and claim your rights."

"My rights can wait," said Digby, simply. "I can't intrude upon Arline in her grief. Ha!" as he caught sight of a man lounging before a shop window on the opposite side of the way, "you don't say that fellow is living here ?"

"That fellow, as you call him," said the doctor, drily, "will have no such scruples as trouble you. If you don't go to Digby Place as its master, depend upon it Horace Clifton will take up his abode there as Arline's broother !"

Digby started.

"That's not Clifton. That's a man called Herbert Clark. I ought to know, since I was the chief witness against him in as neat a case of forgery as was ever tried !"

Dr. West stared.

"I have known him from childhood. His father was a farmer in this place, and he was shipped off to London through Mr. Rushton's influence, because he dared to hit his eyes to Arline. He has not been here for eight years till this spring."

Digby looked puzzled.

"The man I speak of was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude, which would expire about last March. He was most reticent about himself; would not call a single witness to character, and never gave his name or address, only both were proved by his land-lady !"

The detective interposed.

"You're both right probably. Mr. Clifton as likely as not masqueraded in London under a false name; and if his talent is for forgery, don't you see what it proves? Arline Rushton is in communication with her old lover. At the dead of night she admits him to Digby Place, and, tearing a cheque from her father's book, he has every facility for accomplishing his evil purpose !"

"You've hit it, I expect," said Dr. West. "Now what's to be done—arrest him on suspicion ?"

"No," said Digby, gravely, "for Arline's sake we will be patient. We had better see her first, and find out her exact connection with Horace Clifton alias Herbert Clark."

The doctor took a sealed packet from his coat, opened it and glanced at its contents. Only the certificate of the Squire's marriage

with Nancy Trevlyn, widow of William Trevlyn, gentleman; that of each of her children's birth; and last of all, an account of her second marriage at a small country church three long years after Arline's birth.

"We had better drop in at Duke's office," said Dr. West, cautiously. "He was the Squire's solicitor, and will help us to make Miss Trevlyn comprehend her position !"

Digby started at the name.

"A friend of mine has been seeking some Trevlyns for months. I wonder if Arline can possibly be one of them ?"

Mr. Duke was at home. He glanced at the papers handed to him, and observed.—

"This explains everything. When the Squire announced that Mr. Digby here would be his heir I thought he must be dreaming, seeing everything could be inherited by a daughter. Of course, Miss Arline hasn't the right to a penny !"

"It was her father's wish that Mr. Rushton should settle five hundred a-year on her, and the same sum on her sister, Mrs. Ross, if still living, or on the latter's twin daughters in the event of her death."

"I must be dreaming," said Digby, "or truth is stranger far than fiction. I am engaged to Elsie Ross, the twin daughter of a lady who left a wealthy home to marry the husband of her choice."

Dr. West nodded.

"I expect you will be Arline's nephew. Well, we had better go and see her."

No words will express Arline's anger, incredulity and scorn when she heard the story.

She accused Digby Rushton of getting up a conspiracy to deprive her of her rights; adding, she supposed such things must be expected of a forger !

"Silence, madam!" cried the detective, sternly. "You stand in danger of a public prosecution for assisting in that very forgery of which you accuse Mr. Rushton, so I should advise you to be careful."

"You forget yourself!" she said, scornfully.

"And so did you when you admitted Horace Clifton—the lover you were ashamed to see openly—by night, and assisted him in stealing a blank cheque from your father's private drawer. That cheque was filled up and signed by him in imitation of your father's—stepfather's I should say—writing, and he presented it at Messrs. Jackson's Bank."

Arline had turned white as marble. The shaft had gone home.

"That man!" went on the detective, coldly. "He is still at Kesterton. I can lay my hand on him in a moment. Mr. Rushton recognises him as a man who has already suffered seven years' penal servitude; for a second offence he would probably receive more."

Arline shivered.

"Oh, no!" she cried, bitterly, "spare him. Spare him for my sake; he is all I have !"

"My poor girl," said the old doctor, kindly, "surely, after what you have just heard, you can't persist in your miserable infatuation; surely, now you know Horace Clifton is a convict, you can't mean to marry him !"

"Do you think I would have sinned for him ? Do you think I would have risked my home, my father's approval, my position in the world for him, had he been anything but my husband?" cried the miserable woman. "We were married nearly eight years ago; we parted on our wedding day. He promised to claim me in a week. The weeks—ay, and the years—passed, he neither came nor wrote. Only this very June did I know the reason: while I believed he had deserted me, he was at Portland prison."

Not one of the four men there but what pitied her. Digby most of all.

He was gentle and pliable to all women, for the sake of the golden-haired girl he hoped to make his wife.

The ice once broken, Arline poured out her story: Hester Dixon's visit, and promise of a

fortune if she received the bribe of a hundred pounds.

"It was that did it," concluded Arline. "Already I had parted with every jewel I dared to, to supply my husband's necessities. I knew he would so drain me of money that my father must suspect something; I dared not ask the Squire for money. I thought if only I could gain this fortune, Horace and I could go away together somewhere where his past was unknown, and begin a new life. It was the woman tempted me; she told me there was more money than I could dream of."

"Do you know my oldest friend is the custodian of this fortune?" said Digby, who, during their stay at Slingsham, had heard the story of Ronald Fenton's quest. "It is quite true that there is a vast amount of solid gold, and that he holds it in trust for the wife and children of William Trevlyn."

"That would be me and Freda," said Arline, eagerly; "she is married and has two girls."

"One of whom has promised to be my wife. I little thought I was wooing an heiress. Now, Arline, let us talk as friends, not enemies. I will write to Mr. Fenton, and you will find him as anxious to deliver up the fortune as you can be to claim it. Meanwhile, what are your plans? I need not tell you you are welcome to stay here as long as you please, but I can't ask your husband to cross my threshold."

"Horace wouldn't come if you did; he hates you! First of all, tell me, do you mean to prosecute him?"

"No; the Bank will keep the secret. The suspicions of myself are known to very few people—all of whom are convinced of my innocence. For your sake, Arline, Horace Clifton shall go scot-free; also, besides the share of the Trevlyn fortune, I intend to settle five hundred a year on you, and to tie it up so securely that it can neither be alienated nor anticipated."

"Then," said Arline, practically, "I will stay here till everything is settled. Horace has plenty of money to last for the present; he had better go up to London till I can join him. It's a bitter disappointment to me that I shall never be mistress of Digby Place, but I don't think Horace could live here, and so perhaps it's as well. We may seem very black sheep to Pharisees like you, but we shall stick to each other."

"And there is no occasion for us to see Mr. Clifton?"

"Not the least! I will write to him at once. As for the future," said this strange woman, slowly, "Ishan't trouble Kesterton; and as I see no cause for giving people what would be to them a nine-days' wonder, I shall make no announcement of my wedding. We shall see if you four can keep a secret."

"Is she mad!" asked Digby, thoughtfully, when she had left them and Mrs. Hobbs had sent up lunch, which the four men, so strangely brought together, discussed alone.

"She was always strange," said the lawyer.

"Not much heart about her," observed Dr. West; but it was the detective who possessed the key to that strange character.

"She is not mad, but bad," he said, gravely. "There are some natures which seem to have no perception of right or wrong. They see their own self-interest, and they pursue it blindly through all hazards. Mrs. Clifton deceived her parents, and made her life a living lie for seven long years to gratify her passion for a scoundrel; later on she committed heavier crimes in the thirst for gold. She is bad, I tell you, bad to the core."

Digby Rushton slept at the Place; Mrs. West, a kindly matron, having arrived to "take care of Arline," there could be no impropriety in his sleeping beneath the same roof as his cousin's step daughter.

Truth to say, the doctor's wife was far more appreciated by him than by Arline, who kept entirely to her own rooms, and seemed to care nothing for Mrs. West's society.

A letter from Ronald Fenton crossed the

one Digby panned on that first evening after his cousin's death; and when he had read his friend's epistle, young Rushton felt thankful his own, with its important tidings, had been delayed, for Ronald announced his engagement with Mona Ross; and Digby knew quite well the scruples which would have forbidden the young clergyman's proposing to her had he guessed she was the granddaughter of the man to whom he had promised the colonial merchant to make a late atonement.

"It seems wonderful," wrote Ronald, "that I should be so happy. Mona will understand my word is pledged to devote my life to finding Will Trevlyn's heirs, and she does not feel afraid to face the prospect. We may have to spend years on the quest. It may prevent our having a settled home and duties of our own, but we shall be together, and I am not afraid to risk it."

The old Squire's funeral was attended by all the county. One and all showed the last mark of respect to his memory; but none of those who had known her from her childhood regretted Arline's loss of position.

"Poor Mr. Rushton was devoted to her," said one gentleman to Digby; "but she never seemed to have much heart. We all used to say she was not worthy her parents."

The very day after the funeral there was a strange meeting in Mr. Fenton's private sitting-room at the Western Hotel.

Ronald was eager to deliver up his trust. He had not been idle in the last few days. A visit to Denmark Hill told kindhearted Lionel Trevlyn of the discovery of his cousins, and that good-natured individual at once declared he should be delighted to be present at the opening of the wonderful box; and that his wife would gladly receive the twins on a visit as long or short as they pleased to make it; that they might also attend the important ceremony.

There was no question of identity. The papers delivered by the old Squire to Dr. West proved beyond doubt that the late Mrs. Rushton had been William Trevlyn's widow, and that only two children survived of her first marriage, Arline and Eifreda. Proofs of the latter's marriage to George Ross, and of the births of their twin daughters were forthcoming.

Hester Dixon might go back to Natal as soon as she pleased, for her plot had failed at every point.

Angered at her master's passing her off and trusting his treasure to a comparative stranger, the widow had resolved to be beforehand with Mr. Fenton, and, finding out the heirs of William Trevlyn, exact a heavy bribe from them.

She had not received a penny, and might count her expedition to England as an utter failure, and rather an expensive one to boot; for though Mrs. Cooper had given her a free passage for her services as nurse on the voyage, her researches and travels in quest of the heiresses had cost her not a little.

Digby Rushton felt just a little sorry for Arline on the important day. She came to the Western Hotel alone. Evidently she recognized the fact that her husband was not one who could be received by her kindred. Calm, statuariesque beautiful, she walked into the room alone, bowing to Dr. West, Digby, and the Kesterton lawyer, Mr. Duke, who had been requested to attend as a legal authority in the division of the treasure; but she took no notice of the two young girls who sat with pretty Mrs. Trevlyn, or of Ronald Fenton and Lionel Trevlyn, who were on either side of the immense chest, which looked more like a coffin than ever, standing on the long mahogany table.

Arline envied those girls intensely—young, beautiful, with their future all before them. The one soon to be mistress of Digby Place; the other engaged to a young clergyman with seven thousand a year in his own right.

What did they want with William Trevlyn's treasure? A daughter, surely, stood nearer to the dead man than any grandchildren.

The twins were engaged to men of wealth and position. She—Arline—was tied to a husband who would never work for himself, and would only treat her fairly well when she kept him in luxury.

Five hundred a year would never satisfy Horace Clifton. It would only be just if she received the whole, not the half of the treasure in that wonderful chest.

Digby introduced her to Ronald Fenton, and, fancying from his mild features and almost boyish expression he could be as wax in her hands, Arline made an effort to obtain her wish.

"It is ridiculous for these girls," she waved her hand scornfully to where the twins sat on either side of Mrs. Trevlyn, "to claim any portion of my father's property. They were not even born when he died; everything ought to mine."

Ronald bowed. He really hardly knew how to answer this beautiful impudent woman. He was thankful that Lionel Trevlyn took the task of replying to her on himself.

"As a fact," said the young man, coolly, "no one can legally claim this fortune. It was left to Mr. Fenton publicly, and if he chose he could appropriate even a shilling of it without legal penalties. As I can testify, since his return to England, his time has been spent in one long effort to trace my uncle's widow and children. It is simply ridiculous to question his right to divide the property as he pleases, since in the eyes of the law it is his own."

"I should like to observe one thing," said Mr. Duke, quietly. "In the case of personal property the children of an intestate person share equally, irrespective of age, and if one is deceased the children divide the parent's portion between them. I make no attempt to dictate to Mr. Fenton, I only suggest the natural course would be to divide the fortune into two equal parts, one to go to this lady," he bowed to Arline, "the other to be divided between her nieces."

The outer case was opened, the inner one was unfastened, and, amid breathless excitement, the gold was poured on to the table. But a surprise awaited the spectators. At the bottom of the chest was a folded paper endorsed "The last will and testament of William Trevlyn."

It had been drawn up in Australia just before the dead man started for England, and though very simply worded, was—Mr. Duke assured his friends—perfectly in rule.

William Trevlyn directed that if he failed to reach England, of which he seemed to have doubts, his property was to be realized at once and placed in the funds. His widow was to enjoy the interest of the whole until she died, and the principal was to be divided equally between his daughter Eifreda and his son. If either of these two died before their mother the whole property was to pass to the survivor. Arline's name was not so much as mentioned.

"It's ridiculous!" said Arline, coldly. "A will like that can't stand. My rights are far superior to those of my sister's children. I claim my father's fortune, and I will have it, if I put the whole affair into Chancery."

"You can't do that," said Mr. Duke, shortly. "The property in point of law is Mr. Fenton's. Your case won't hold water."

"I think I can in a measure explain the will," said Lionel Trevlyn. "My uncle left England before the birth of his youngest child. Of course the news was written to him, but this will was evidently written under great depression of spirits, and naturally at such a time a man's thoughts would turn to the children who were old enough to miss him and write him loving letters rather than to a babe he had never seen."

For the first time Mona spoke; taking her sister's hand as though to draw her forward, she said, gently.

"We do not want money. We are happy enough without it. I wish—and I am sure

Elfy agrees with me—that our aunt should have a share."

"Yes," acquiesced Elfy, "I should like it to be just as though we had not found this will. I am sure Mr. Rushton"—and she blushed rosy red—"will consent."

But this was too much for Arline.

"Consent!" she cried, scornfully. "He ought to give up every penny. Is it not enough that he has Digby Place and every farthing of the late Squire's income? Why should he wish to rob me of my father's fortune also?"

"He does not," said Digby, gravely. "Believe me, Arline, I will gladly join in any scheme for making over a portion of this wealth to you."

#### CHAPTER XX., AND LAST.

ARLINE CLIFTON never touched a penny of her father's fortune. She left the Western Hotel to join her husband. Whether she was too full of thought to notice how she walked, whether she was reckless and did not care what happened, was never known. Crossing the Strand rapidly at a very crowded part she was knocked down. A cab passed over her before the bystanders could appear, and she was picked up dead. A letter in her pocket addressed to Miss Rushton, Digby Place, Kesterton, was the only clue to her identity.

News of her untimely fate was sent at once to the little Hertfordshire village and forwarded by Mrs. Hobbs to her new master, who was just then enjoying the hospitality of Lionel Trevlyn.

"After life's fitful fever she sleeps well." That was the first thought which came to Digby as he read the news. His second, that Horace Clifton would be terribly disappointed.

It was a sad reflection that in all the world no one would mourn for Arline except her husband. In all the world only one person would regret her, and he not for her own loss, but because without her he was deprived of sharing her wealth. Then, looking forward to the future that must have been Arline's as the wife of a criminal, thinking of the dark pages there must have been in her life if spent with Horace Clifton, Digby could feel almost thankful she was taken.

Taey laid her to rest in Kesterton churchyard. The bell which had tolled so recently for the old Squire rang out a knell for his daughter.

Horace Clifton made no sign, enforced no claim on those beautiful remains, and so the ordering of Arline's funeral fell entirely to Digby; and when in time a marble cross marked her last home, it bore no allusion to her fatal marriage, but described her simply as the youngest child of William Trevlyn, Esq., and the beloved adopted daughter of James Rushton, of Digby Place.

As soon as he could break away from the multiplicity of business crowded upon him Digby returned to Slingham. He found his mother had completely changed her note, and was now as delighted at his engagement as she had been dismayed. She meant to go on living at the Grey House, but had promised Elfy to pay a long visit some day to Digby Place.

As for Mrs. Belton, she was simply enchanted at the prospect of the double wedding, though it would deprive her at one stroke of her governess, her organist and favourite companion; but then bright, sunshiny spirits like Mabel's do not measure their own loss, but others' gain.

Digby Rushton had a brilliant idea. Digby End was so far from Kesterton that many people made much ado about the difficulty of attending church there. He was richer than he had ever dreamed of, why should he not build and endow a new church at the more distant part of the little hamlet, and induce Charles Belton to give up the poverty-stricken living of Slingham, and become the first Vicar of Digby End?

Money, which can do much in this world, even conquers such difficulties as the scarcity of land and the slowness of builders.

Digby gave the choicest site on his estate, and, no expense being spared, it came about that the first anniversary of Elfy's wedding-day was also the date of the consecration of the church, and the first christening in the new edifice was that of James Rushton, the heir of Digby Place, by the Rev. Charles Belton, his father's old schoolfellow.

Some people wondered Mr. Fenton was not appointed to the new living, that the twin sisters might live near each other, but Ronald felt that with his wealth he ought not to fill a post that would be a blessing to a needy fellow clergyman.

Ronald and his wife believed they had a mission to the distant lands where the fortune was made which the repentant colonial merchant had bequeathed to the young chaplain.

Very soon, therefore, after Mr. Belton had settled at Digby End, Mona and her husband sailed for Africa. The grandchild of the man he so cruelly wronged has stood by Mr. Griegson's grave and breathed her forgiveness. There in that distant seaport town Ronald Fenton labours for men's souls, and his wife spends in charity a large portion of the wealth which came to her through A Late ATONEMENT.

[THE END.]

#### JASPER PALLISER'S GRANDDAUGHTER.

##### CHAPTER VI.—(continued.)

"So glad to see you at last, Mr. Rogers," she said, kindly. "Lady Vane, how do you do? Your niece is here, I hope? Let me introduce Mr. Rogers, an old friend of mine, to you."

And Jim Rogers found himself bowing to the handsome woman glittering with diamonds his hostess had just shaken hands with.

Something in his face and manner pleased Lady Vane, who had a weakness for good-looking young men even yet, and she smiled kindly at him, and in her usual pleasant easy manner drew him at once into conversation, putting him instantly at his ease, and making him think her the most charming of women, and Jim, when at his ease, was a good talker, full of wit and humour, so Lady Vane was delighted with her new acquaintance.

"You knew Lady Accrington abroad? What a delightful woman she is. You have been in Australia? Just come from there. Indeed!" she went on in her usual voluble style, giving Jim no time to answer her numerous questions. "Do you know many people here to-night, Mr. Rogers? Have you not been dancing? There is—rather a mixture—a good many strangers—people one does not often meet in the room. I dare say some—"

"Indeed, I know no one," he interrupted. "To me it seems a very brilliant party."

"And so it is," she cried; "a very charming party. See! there is Lady Yorke. Isn't she lovely? the dark beauty in the maze brocade and gold embroidery. And there is Lilian Fane, another of our beauties. How well that blue gaze becomes her, and those soft white plumes, and there—"

"But—but who is that?" asked Jim, breathlessly. "She is lovely if you like, the girl in a white dress with pink flowers, and silver embroidery. See! she is coming towards us."

"That. She with the pearl ornaments and a diamond star?" asked Lady Vane with a gratified smile.

"Yes?"

"Ah, that is my niece. Nella, let me in-

troduce Mr. Rogers to you. Lady Accrington tells me she knew him well abroad."

Nella bowed and smiled pleasantly. Jim Rogers, who seemed almost stunned by her beauty, faltered out a few words, and almost trembled when he realised he had had the audacity to ask this lovely creature for a dance.

She looked at her card.

"Fortunately, I have a dance left," she said; "in fact the very next one, Mr. Rogers, if you are not engaged for it."

Engaged! What engagement would have kept him from dancing with her? He could hardly believe in his good fortune when he found himself with his arm round Nella's slim waist gliding round the room to the strains of the last new waltz.

He was a good dancer, though of late years he had not often indulged in the amusement. Nella, who was, as all young girls should be, extremely fond of the amusement, especially with a good partner, enjoyed her waltz exceedingly, and when it was over to Jim's great joy her partner for the next dance did not appear, so the two sat together in a quiet corner, to which Jim, hoping she might elude the eyes of the individual whom he made no doubt was searching frantically and vainly for her, had led her, and there they chattered away together for several minutes, Jim, having recovered his self-possession, making himself as agreeable to Nella as he had done to Lady Vane.

And all the time they talked his eyes drank in her beauty eagerly. How lovely, how high-bred she was, how refined and delicate, how sweet and low were the tones of her voice, her silvery laughter, how bright and gracious her smile!

Never had honest Jim Rogers in his wildest dreams imagined such beauty. He seemed to be gazing into the face of an angel, for surely no mere woman was ever so fair as the girl before him!

His glimpse of paradise was soon over, however, the spot where he had so cleverly hid his divinity was discovered, and a moment later he had to resign Nella to a fair, simpering youth with pink cheeks and white eye-lashes, who Jim felt a vehement desire to assault on the spot, and who for the moment he regarded with the fiercest hatred. He stood and watched Nella for some moments, then like a wise man made his way back to Lady Vane, and presently had the honour of taking that lady to the supper-room, and so favourable was the impression he made on her that she—for she loved new acquaintances, and there was a freshness about Jim Rogers that delighted her, graciously expressed a hope that he would call in Belgrave-square, and later on in the evening Jim, who lingered about her chair, was rewarded for his attentions by obtaining another dance with Nella.

Needless to say he went home as deeply in love as ever man was, and dreamt all night of Nella's blue eyes and sweet smile. Just after he had seen Lady Vane and her god-daughter into their carriage, and they had driven off, a private hansom dashed up to Lady Accrington's door, and two men got out of it. With a feeling of repugnance Jim recognised Lord Rossallyn, and his constant companion—Captain Graham.

"Is Lady Vane still here, do you know?" he asked of one of the servants.

"Just this moment gone, my lord," replied the man.

"Oh, indeed?" he said. "Well, George," returning to his friend, "we must put in an appearance, I suppose."

And the two men sauntered into the now empty ballroom, Graham saying something in a light tone about being "off duty" to which Rossallyn replied by a careless laugh, adding,—

"Who's that fellow who stared at us so fiercely as he came in?" for he had caught Jim's eye.

"Never saw the chap before—a colonial friend of Accrington's, I should judge by his

get up," returned the other. "There has been a queer lot of people here to-night I fancy."

"Lady Vane—he must know her then," muttered Jim, gloomily, looking after Rossallyn. "I'm glad she is gone; he is not the sort of fellow any good girl should know, much less an angel like that."

And Jim walked away with a lowering brow.

"What a very pleasant man Mr. Rogers is," said Lady Vane, leaning back in the carriage comfortably. "Did he tell you anything about himself, Nella? Did you like him?"

"Yes, I thought him very nice—very unlike most men one meets," replied Nella. "No, he said very little about himself; only that he had known Sir Harry in Australia. He was very pleasant indeed," and she sighed.

"Poor child! I am afraid you have not enjoyed your evening very much," said Lady Vane. "I wonder what detained Rossallyn?"

Nella started. To tell the truth she was not thinking of Rossallyn.

"Oh! I enjoyed myself very much, aunt," she replied. "Roderick said he might not be able to come. He is going away to the north to-morrow morning for a few days, and starts early, in a few hours, in fact now, for it is morning already. Besides, I don't think Roderick cares for balls."

"He cares about going out with you, though, I am sure," said Lady Vane. "Do you know why he is going to Scotland, Nella?"

"On business," replied the girl, thoughtfully. "Do you know, auntie, I have fancied for the last few days that something is troubling Roderick. He—he seems so preoccupied. I wonder—"

And she paused.

"Men have always something to think about, my dear," answered Lady Vane. "I have not noticed anything in Rossallyn's manner. By the way, I asked that Mr. Rogers to call."

"Did you?" replied Nella, indifferently; evidently she was not paying much attention to Lady Vane's words; then she added, quickly, "It's strange Mr. Parker has told us no more about that new claimant, aunt."

"Most likely he'll hear nothing more about him," replied Lady Vane, easily. "Here we are at home at last. How tired I am!"

## CHAPTER VII.

TESSA'S STORY—WHO SHE WAS.

MRS. MACDONALD and her newly-found friend reached Brighton without further accident on the morning of their flight from London. The younger woman sat during the whole of the journey cowering in a corner of the carriage, with her veil drawn closely over her face, and her large cloak wrapped round her as if she still feared to be met and recognised by some secret enemy, and, arrived at their destination, it became evident to Mrs. Macdonald that the poor girl was worn out, and that further excitement might bring on a serious illness.

So she put her to bed in a small room leading out of her own bedroom, and to which there was no access save by passing through that apartment, concocted a composing draught from the contents of her little American travelling medicine chest, insisted on her swallowing a basin of strong soup, and in an hour or two she had the satisfaction of seeing her charge in a sound and apparently dreamless slumber.

"What would Silas say to it all?" she thought, as she gazed at the sleeping girl. "He said I was safe to be meeting with adventures, but he never reckoned on such an adventure as this! I suppose she'll tell me all about herself when she feels stronger, and I'm pretty certain she'll tell me the truth. I hope I've done right—yes, I'm sure I have; anyway, she'd have been buried alive—alive," and Amanda shuddered. "If she'd not

revived and I'd not been there and taken her away when she recovered, my belief is she'd have died really of fright, or those men would have murdered her! Poor girl! who could hurt one so beautiful, so helpless as she is?"

It was indeed a beautiful face that met Mrs. Macdonald's gaze as she contemplated the sleeping girl. The dark silky eyelashes fringing her hazel eyes swept the oval cheeks, the curved lips were parted in sleep, showing the small white teeth behind them; the outline of the delicate features, the clearly-cut profile, was perfect.

She was pale and worn now from terror and suffering, but in health, Mrs. Macdonald thought, must possess a complexion rich, warm and transparent, and the dark auburn hair crowned a classically-shaped head and broad, intelligent brow. Her hands were small and white, a glance at them showed Mrs. Macdonald they had been unused to hard work. What had been her station in life, her calling, her occupation?

Mrs. Macdonald felt intensely curious and anxious to learn her history.

Very little conversation passed between them that day. She lay in a quiet, drowsy state watching Amanda as she flitted about the rooms unpacking her boxes and arranging everything comfortably.

Now and then tears filled her eyes, and she sighed deeply, but not till evening came did she volunteer to impart her story to her new friend; then, after Amanda had brought her some coffee and taken a seat beside her she began to speak.

"How good you are!" she said, earnestly, raising her clear hazel eyes to her face.

"How few would treat a stranger, a poor wail of whom she knew nothing, not even the name, as you have treated me! I owe you my life, madame, more than my life. How shall I ever show you how grateful I am to you?"

"By getting well and strong and letting me help you to punish those horrible wretches we saw yesterday," replied Mrs. Macdonald, lightly.

She shuddered.

"My own funeral! It is not often a person can say they have witnessed what others believed to be that—and to think if it had not been for you, I—"

And she paused and covered her face with her hands, and for the first time Mrs. Macdonald perceived on her finger a wedding-ring!

"You are married!" she ejaculated in some surprise.

She dropped her hands as if stung.

"Married—yes, I am married, I believe—and yet—Listen, madam," she said, wildly, "listen, and I will tell you my story, my sad, miserable story, and then, perhaps, you will be able to discover from it what at present I cannot understand, namely, why my uncle, Rocco Cassone, tried to take away my life."

She paused a minute; then fixing her eyes on Armando, she began.—

"I was born in Italy, of Italian parents. My father had a small property near Naples, my mother was an orphan of good family. I can remember neither of them very distinctly, however, for I was but three years old when they died, and then I was taken by my aunt, Rocco Cassone's wife, to live with her and her husband.

"The first four years of my life passed not unhappily. My aunt was a kind woman, and for a companion I had a nephew of Rocco Cassone's, also an orphan, and about seven years my senior. He was, and always has been, very good to me. Ah! if he had been with me now, all this misery would never have fallen on me, he would have protected me from them!"

She stopped a moment and wiped the tears from her eyes, then proceeded,—

"When I was about fourteen my aunt died, and for a little while there was a talk of sending me into a convent; but my uncle

wanted someone to take care of his house, and as he found I was able to do it he kept me with him, sending me regularly twice a week to the neighbouring town, under Giovanni's care, where I was taught music and singing, and insisting on my spending all the time not taken up by my household duties in the cultivation of my voice.

"My uncle was a cold, grasping, avaricious man, and, as I soon learnt, intended to make me a public singer, much to Giovanni's indignation, who bade him remember I was a lady, and not of the class from which public singers in Italy usually come. He scoffed at the objection, and at the idea that my life was to be passed in idleness and ease. I must work, he said, I was a beggar without a farthing, and that he had no intention of supporting me.

"He and Giovanni had a quarrel over the matter, high words passed between them. My cousin loved me, and wished one day to make me his wife; but Rocco Cassone laughed at the idea, treated it as a boyish folly, and sent his nephew away to Venice till such time as he was cured of it.

"My poor Giovanni! who, up to the present day, if he be still alive, loves me as he loved me years ago. Ah! if I had only loved him—if I had only known the worth of his love—of his strong, generous heart! but I was a child almost then, though I was not to remain a child much longer, and I did not understand his worth.

"About a year later an English artist came to our village and took up his quarters at the little inn. He was tall, fair and handsome, with a golden-coloured moustache and beard, and blue eyes—a veritable sun god I thought him. Well! Ah! why need I go on, why tell the rest? He met me one day, and cast on me a look of humble admiration; the next day and the next we met again, he spoke, we became friends—we—Ah! and she threw up her hands passionately, it was the old old story, Madam, old as the world is old! I loved him, he pretended he loved me, and, fool that I was, I believed him.

"So many weeks passed," she went on, after a short pause, "and all that time, though we met daily, my uncle had no knowledge or suspicion of what was going on; he was busy amongst his patients, he was a doctor, I forgot to tell you, and was constantly away from home. I dreaded the day when he should learn all! It was not much longer deferred. One afternoon, when, grown bold from long impunity, my lover had come into the garden of my uncle's house, and was talking to me beneath the orange trees, with my hand in his, Dr. Cassone suddenly appeared before us. He asked my lover, with ironical politeness, his eyes glowing like live coal, with suppressed rage, his business, and bade me in a harsh voice to go away into the house.

"I had no choice but to obey. I went to my room, trembling with terror, and it was many days before I saw my uncle again, and, for all those days, I remained locked up in my room, a prisoner. What my life was like after this you may imagine. My uncle put the worst possible construction on my conduct, told me my character was gone, that I had disgraced him, and that my lover had gone too—had deserted me, and scoffed at the idea that he had ever intended to marry me. He had sent him off—forbidden him the house, he said I should never marry him even if he wished it as much as I vowed he did. I should never see him more!

"Would I had never seen him more, but that was not to be. Soon he made his appearance in the village again, and found means of communicating with me. He urged me to fly with him—to marry him secretly; assured me that Dr. Cassone had no legal power to forbid it, besought me to trust myself to him. For a while I resisted; then, my life growing more and more intolerable, I consented. We fled together, and next day were married in Naples. It was in a small church on the outskirts of the town that the wedding took place;

and, to my surprise, on looking at the priest who had performed it, I recognised him. He was a man with whom Giovanni had had a quarrel, the rights of which he had never told me, and for whom people in our neighbourhood had not a good word to say.

"I shivered as I looked at him, but his dark, cruel eyes met mine without a shade of recognition in them. It seemed to me an evil omen, however, that he should have performed the marriage ceremony; though my husband laughed at me for it, I could not for a long time get rid of the disagreeable impression.

"We went on to Nice the day after our marriage, and from there my husband wrote to Dr. Cassone, telling him of what had taken place, and I wrote, begging his forgiveness. No letters came in answer. Evidently, my uncle had cast me off, and intended to have nothing more to do with me! I cared but little, for I was very happy. Yes, during the first few months of my married life I was happy, but a change soon came.

"My husband, at first so fond, so attentive to me, by little and little grew cold, and tired of me. Do what I could to please him, I could not succeed, and soon he neglected me openly; left me for hours and days alone, and at length I learned that not only was I no longer loved, but that I was supplanted, that I had a rival, that another woman had stolen my husband's heart from me! His heart!" and she laughed bitterly. "Had he a heart? Could he love? You shall judge.

"Like most southern women's, my temper was quick and jealous. Madame, when I learnt that I was betrayed, I did not hide my feelings, but gave vent to them. There was a terrible scene between me and my husband. He laughed scornfully at my anger and jealousy; asserted his right to please himself; vowed he would be no woman's slave—certainly not mine; and then, his wrath rising, he cursed me and flung me from him violently, leaving the house in a storm of rage.

"When I saw him again, he was calm. He seemed to have forgotten what had passed between us; he was cheerful—gay even—and treated me as if there had been no quarrel between us. He had had letters from England that appeared to have given him pleasure, and I heard him whistling and singing in his studio that day as I had not heard him for many weeks.

"A month later he did not return from an expedition to Monte Carlo in time for dinner, as I had expected him to. The evening and night passed—all the next day and the next—then came the post with a letter from him. I read it and fell in a swoon on the floor. He had left me for ever!

"I cannot bear even now, after the lapse of seven long years, to think of the days that followed, Madame, the anguish, the shame, the misery I suffered. Let it pass, I lived through it—I did not die—but when, after a long illness, I regained my health, and found myself penniless and alone in the world, I found also that my love for my husband was dead, and instead a feeling of contempt and hatred for him had taken possession of my heart. Contempt for myself too, that I could have loved one so mean, so heartless, so unutterably wicked.

"I never heard of or from him again, from that day to this, I have never set eyes on him, and whether he be dead or alive I know not. When I regained my health, the few acquaintances I had—and my husband though he knew many people at Nice, had introduced me to none of them—had left the place, and I began to cast about for the means of earning my bread. I could sing. I had a good voice, well cultivated, and at a local theatre I presently got a small engagement, and for two years I wandered from place to place with a travelling company, supporting myself by my singing.

"Suddenly, as I was leaving the theatre at Genoa one evening, Giovanni, my cousin, met

me, told me my uncle wished to be reconciled to me, and entreated me to come home. He (Giovanni) had heard of my misfortune and sought me everywhere, and by a chance had at last found me. So, being unable to withstand his entreaties, I consented to return with him to Naples, at which place Dr. Cassone was now living.

"My uncle received me with kindness. There was a strange change in his manner towards me, and I often in vain had to comprehend why he treated me with such far greater consideration than of yore. He was poorer than when I had left him, I found, and had sold his little property. Giovanni was constantly away with his regiment which was stationed at Ancona, and I fancied that my companionship was perhaps acceptable to my uncle, as well as the money I earned by singing, for, contrary to Giovanni's wishes, but following Dr. Cassone's advice, I still continued my work.

"A year ago I suddenly lost my voice, and though my uncle and other doctors did all they could to restore it, their efforts were unavailing, and the loss threw a great damp on our spirits besides revealing to me a secret I had half suspected before. Dr. Cassone was a ruined man—the money I earned was all we had to depend on!

"As time went on and I got no better, he grew silent and restless and, I could see, was resolving some scheme or another in his mind. At length he suggested that we should try a complete change of climate for the restoration of my voice—go to Paris and then to London. The change he believed or affected to believe might cure me, and, much against my better judgment, six months ago we started for France.

"That some business above and beyond the ostensible one had induced my uncle to undertake this journey, I had more than a suspicion, but what that business was, I had and have little idea, however. Arrived in Paris, he became suddenly much more cheerful, and expressed a certainty that in London, where he intended to consult a physician, an old friend of his, that man we saw, about my case, my cure would be completed.

"I was loth to go to England, I dreaded it; for was not the man who had ruined and deserted me an Englishman? But Dr. Cassone was determined on it, and, rather than anger him, I consented.

"Two months ago we reached England, and for a while we remained at Dover, my uncle constantly going up and down to London, and sometimes remaining away for a day or two. Then, about a month ago, he brought his friend, Dr. Bonetti, to see me, and after a consultation it was decided we should move to town.

"I found myself at the end of our journey in a miserable, gloomy, dirty house in what seemed to me to be a very poor quarter of the great city. When I asked my uncle the reason of this, he said he wished me to be near Bonetti's, who lived within a stone's throw of us.

"Oh! how I hated the place! I felt an oppression on my chest, a whirling in my brain, and, the very next morning after our arrival, woke up with a burning fever and a sense of depression and weakness I had never before experienced. Day by day I grew worse, my mind as well as my body seemed affected. Hourly I grew weaker and weaker, and as time passed on I became horribly afraid of Bonetti and of my uncle too.

"They whispered mysteriously together. I felt sure I was the subject of their talk. I heard scraps of conversation I could not understand, but which I knew related to me. I begged for a nurse, a companion, but was refused. I implored to be taken to another house, I said the place I was in was killing me. My remonstrances were treated as the idle fancies of a sick brain. A third doctor was called in, but did nothing for me. Death seemed not far off. I sometimes felt it was

near, and yet I had no specific disease. What was killing me?

"One day my uncle and Bonetti entered my room at an early hour, and I plainly could see something was about to happen. They came to my bedside, and, after feeling my pulse with unusual care, asked me if I felt strong enough to move, for, if so, they had decided to take me into the country. I jumped at the idea. I longed to be out of the dull, gloomy city, and in the midst of fields and trees once more. I counted the hours till we should be starting.

"Next morning we set out, but hardly had I got into the cab than I was seized with a terrible faintness. I fell back, and remember no more till I opened my eyes and found myself on the bed in the room where you, madame, first saw me.

"After that my remembrance of events grows indistinct. An intolerable feeling of weight on my brain crushed me down. I remember seeing my uncle and Bonetti standing by my bedside, and on one occasion the strange doctor I have mentioned, but could neither speak nor move.

"I remember hearing my uncle say 'She is dead!' and then, save as in a dream, I remember nothing more till I awoke suddenly as if some great weight had been lifted from me, and saw you beside me. Now, madame, can you solve my riddle? Why did Rocco Cassone try to take away my life?"

"My dear child, are you certain—" began Mrs. Macdonald.

"Certain! As sure as my name is Tessa Vasari. Madame, I half suspected it at first; later on, when I grew too feeble to resist, I knew that every dose of medicine they gave me aggravated my symptoms; and when they thought I did not hear or could not understand, they let fall words that told me but too plainly their villainous intentions. But why did they do it? What advantage to them—to Rocco Cassone—would my death be?"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MADE KNOWN TO EACH OTHER.

"When is Rossallyn going to return, Nella, my love?" said Lady Vane, one day to her goddaughter, about a week after the ball at Lady Accrington's; "that business in Scotland is keeping him a long time."

"I heard from him yesterday, Aunt Delia," replied Nella, thoughtfully, "he hopes to be back in a few days now, and seems much put out at being kept away so long. He does not say what his business is. I hope when we are married he will take me more into his confidence, aunt," she added, wistfully. "At present it seems to me—I can hardly explain what I mean, but as it, though I am to be his wife, I am to know and to expect to know nothing about his affairs or—or his daily life."

"You can hardly expect to know much till you are married," replied Lady Vane, rather uneasily, for Lord Rossallyn's continued absence had made her uncomfortable. "Don't fret over it, child, he'll be back soon no doubt. Meantime, it is lucky Lord Rossallyn is not a jealous man, Nella. It is well for us you have such a devoted admirer in your train as Mr. Rogers to look after us! He is really too kind. Look at these exquisite flowers! I said both you and I loved roses, and did you ever see such beauties as these? I have been trying at all the libraries to get that last new novel of Ouida's and couldn't, and said so yesterday by chance, and that you wanted to read it, and behold! here it comes this morning with Mr. Rogers' compliments. I wonder if all young men in Australia are such *preux chevaliers*? It must be a delightful country if they are! He is coming to lunch to-day, you know, and to drive with us afterwards. Nella, I don't believe you half appreciate him!"

"Yes, I do aunt, he is charming; but I believe it is you he admires," laughed Nella.

"Me! nonsense!" replied Lady Vane, quite pleased, however, at the idea, for, spite of her forty-five years, she had not given up the idea of being admired, by any means.

"He knows I am engaged," continued Nella, with a blush; "but you—"

"Does he know, I wonder?" said Lady Vane.

"Of course—everybody does," replied the girl.

"Hum! it's not announced yet, remember," retorted Lady Vane; "but, of course, most likely he knows, as you say. Nevertheless—"

But here the subject of their conversation was announced and entered, and was received by Lady Vane with much warmth. Nella's face brightened, and a smile lighted it up as she gave Jim Rogers her hand.

As Lady Vane said, it was nice to have such a pleasant acquaintance, she thought, one so honest and unassuming and fresh as Mr. Rogers. There was something about him that made one trust and respect him as well as like him—so different to the frivolity and affectation, the pretence and worldliness one met with amongst young men in society. Of course his attentions meant nothing. He was no doubt aware of her engagement, and even if he were not, he would yet surely understand that—that a young lady in her position had, as Lady Vane was never tired of reminding her, a duty to herself and society to perform, and must marry well.

And poor Jim Rogers, as he sat beside Lady Vane listening to her flow of sparkling small talk, in which Nella now and then joined, glancing every other moment at the beautiful girl opposite him, with eyes full of the deepest devotion, every moment feeling the love he entertained for her growing greater and stronger, wondering if—if by any strange, unforeseen, unthinkable chance she would ever leave how dear she was to him—if she would ever feel for him a little of the love he felt for her, quite unconscious that the heart he coveted, and the hand he would have given worlds to call his, were pledged already, and to the man who of all the men he had met, had impressed him as being the most heartless and coldblooded!

Poor Jim! he was living in a fool's paradise indeed, hoping where there was no hope, longing vainly for the unattainable; ignorant of the insuperable, insurmountable obstacles that lay between him and the object that each day seemed to grow dearer and dearer to him!

But so it was! And when a week later, Lady Vane informed him that she and her niece were about to visit the seaside for a short time, Jim implored to be allowed to see them safely to their journey's end, and her ladyship, with a gracious smile, consented.

Needless to say that Jim, as soon as he had seen the ladies safely to their lodgings at Brighton, betook himself to an hotel, and calling next morning on his friends, announced that he was so delighted with the place, that he had made up his mind to remain there for the next few days at least.

"It will be nice having him here," thought Lady Vane after he had gone. "There are not many men here we know, and Nella likes him, and really requires someone to cheer her up in Rossallyn's absence. The poor child is fretting about it, and it is too bad of him. After only a few weeks' engagement, to leave her for so long is really too bad. What can his business be? No wonder Nella is hurt."

But Nella was not hurt in the manner Lady Vane supposed; but during Lord Rossallyn's absence she had thought over her position a good deal, and over the future in store for her.

Had she really acted as prudently and wisely as Lady Vane was anxious she should believe? Were her feelings towards Lord Rossallyn, and his towards her such as they should be? Did she love him enough? Was he the sort of man to make her happy—hand-

some, rich, clever and distinguished as he undoubtedly was?

The more Nella thought of it, the more uneasy she became; and the continued absence of her lover, his silence regarding the affairs that kept him from her, and a certain selfishness and coldness that made itself apparent in his letters in spite of the flattering words and expressions they contained, a lack of something—of what, she could not define—in them, added to her doubts and fears.

Sometimes, though she did her best to put such thoughts out of her head, she found herself contrasting Lord Rossallyn with Jim Rogers, and wishing that Roderick were more like him—an honest and open, as easy to please, and as easy to understand. Yet; though Rossallyn was a peer, and Jim Rogers a poor colonial—a nobody—of whom they knew nothing, and who, perhaps, many people would say Lady Vane was wrong and foolish for taking up!

Whilst Jim was idling away his days in dangerous blissfulness at Brighton, fetching and carrying for Lady Vane, sunning himself in the light of Nella's eyes, watching her every look, and plunging deeper and deeper each day into a sea of doubts and hopes, fears and bewilderments, for her sake, Messrs. Howard and Beatson were waiting with some impatience for a reply to two or three letters they had written to their client at the address he had given them, to which they had received no answer, and it was not till Jim had been a fortnight at Brighton, and was turning over in his own mind a variety of excuses for remaining there yet another week, that Messrs. Howard and Beatson, having at length discovered his whereabouts, sent him a letter begging him to return to London, and asking for an immediate interview.

Jim read the letter very grumpily.

"Go to London—leave her! Let me see; to-morrow we were to go for a drive, next day for a sail, Thursday to a picnic, Friday—I might go up on Friday. Hang business! I came all the way from home to see about this affair, and now I don't seem to care a straw whether I win or lose. I used to think of it from morning to night—couldn't get it out of my head. I used to read those old papers and letters over and over again, and wonder if they'd settle the question; and when I took them to Howard six weeks ago pretty nearly, I recollect I counted the days that must pass before I could learn what they thought of them; but since I've known her, I've not thought about the matter half a dozen times. I don't seem to care about it; I only think and care about her. What makes me so mad about her, I wonder? I never cared for any girl before; no, not since I was a boy of fifteen, and fancied myself in love with Maggie Maguire, the red-haired daughter of our chief shepherd. Poor Maggie!"

And he smiled as he thought of the rosy-checked, red-haired girl, now a stout matron and the mother of a thriving family.

"Nella seems to have taken possession of me somehow," he went on. "It's not her beauty only, it's her whole self. She has faults, I can see them, I am not blind. She is a little worldly, but it is not by nature. She has learnt it from Lady Vane. Her nature is generous and unselfish. She is proud, and perhaps too apt to despise those she considers beneath her. She thinks that I—ah! perhaps if she knew, if it turned out! By Jove! what a fool I am!" and he started up excitedly. "Yes, it might make all the difference; I must go off to London at once, on Friday at any rate. I—what a blind idiot I have been not to see it before! I will go to Howard and beg him to hurry on as fast as possible. Have they heard anything, I wonder?"

And he took up the letter again.

"Hum! must go with him to the other party's lawyers—discuss the matter, of course—disconcerted them, I daresay we have—good case—would I have come so many thousand miles if I hadn't been pretty sure I had a good case? Well," and he put away the

letter again, "I'll be with Howard on Friday. I'll write and tell him so."

"Going to town on Thursday evening, are you, Mr. Rogers? but you'll come to the picnic?" said Nella, eagerly, next day, when Jim, walking by her side on the esplanade, pronounced his plans.

"Certainly I will be at the picnic if you wish it—do you?" he replied.

"Of course I wish it," she laughed, in reply.

"Then I shall be there; indeed, if you don't wish me to go to town on Thursday I'll not go. You're only to say the word, and I'll throw my lawyer over—let my business take its chance. I—I'd do more than that to please you, Miss Danvers!" he said.

"But that wouldn't please me at all," laughed Nella, a little nervously, for there was that in Jim's manner that startled her. "I should be sorry indeed if, to gratify a wish of mine, you should do anything to injure your business affairs. Lawyers must be attended to. They are terrible tyrants, as I know, though my lawyer is a good, kind soul, and a great friend of mine."

"So is mine," interrupted Jim. "I knew him at home—in Australia I mean—Howard's an excellent fellow. I forgot to leave him my address when I left town, and he's been writing letter after letter to me without getting a reply."

"Dear me! Well, if you're business is better to hear than not to hear," said Nella. "Now I've been expecting letters for days on a subject that's been worrying me, too, a good deal, and no letter has come. Thanks, no; you're very kind, but I don't think you could help me. Mr. Parker will certainly write when he has the information I require. Oh, look! what a very handsome woman that is getting out of the cab there, and what a lovely creature her companion is; but how ill she looks. See, she has drawn down her veil as if she did not wish to be looked at. How careful the other is of her. Foreigners—Americans I should say."

It was Mrs. Macdonald and her friend who had attracted Nella's attention.

"Yes, she is handsome. Not English certainly, I didn't catch sight of the other's face," replied Jim, who had no eyes but for Nella's, beside whom all others seemed plain and uninteresting, and they passed on.

It was a heavenly morning, the air was fresh and invigorating, the sky clear and bright.

Lady Vane's attention was engrossed by an old admirer who had suddenly appeared on the scene. Nella was left to Jim's care entirely, and for an hour they sat together on the beach in close and undisturbed talk.

Jim never forgot that morning in after years. Then, for the first time, hope rose up in his heart, a conviction—not that Nella loved him, but that, given the time and opportunity, he might win her love.

Friday morning saw him at Messrs. Howard and Beatson's office. The lawyer met him with a smiling face.

"We've seen these people, Rogers," said I think we've given them a facer," he said. "Never saw a fellow look so flabbergasted as the old chap did. We are to be there again at three o'clock to-day, if that will suit you."

"Oh, perfectly! Sorry I kept you without an answer to your letters for so long, Howard. Will this business be a lengthy one?" said Jim.

"Well, a matter of a couple of hundred thousand pounds and an estate can't be fought out in an hour or a day, my boy," replied Mr. Howard. "If the other side come to a compromise—though I don't see why we should accept a compromise—why then—"

"I didn't mean that. I meant, in fact, when can I get back to Brighton, Howard?" interrupted Jim, with something like a blush.

"Oh, ho! I see! You've attractions at Brighton, have you? Ha, ha! you'll be a person of note and of very considerable

attractions yourself presently, my boy. So take care. Beware of the fair sex, and of match-making mothers in particular, or you'll find yourself a Benedict in no time. No! Well! we won't keep you longer than we can help, Rogers. I should say you might return to Brighton on Sunday if you're so minded. And now to business."

At the very moment when Jim Rogers entered Mr. Howard's office Nella Danvers and her maid were taking their places in the train from Brighton to London, bound on a shopping expedition.

"I can't get what Roderick wants me to wear at Lady Ashley's here, aunt," she said that morning to Lady Vane, throwing down a letter she had received from Lord Rosedale. "I will just run up to town with Estelle and see to it myself. I won't even trust Lorenz And—and I think, auntie, I will just look in at Mr. Parker's, and ask him if he has heard anything more about that new claimant."

"You poor dear child! How you do worry yourself. Of course he hasn't," laughed Lady Vane. "He was a fraud like the others, as he said."

"I—I hardly think so, sometimes, aunt," replied Nelly, thoughtfully, "and I am sure Roderick thinks there's sometimes in it."

"My dear Nella!" cried Lady Vane in consternation.

"He does. I feel certain of it from—from his manner of writing of it, and from little things he lets drop—though he says nothing directly. Oh! I wish—I wish," and tears filled her eyes, "that he would write of it and of other things more openly. I hate hints and innuendoes. I shall go to Mr. Parker, Aunt Delia—"

"Go, by all means, my dear," replied Lady Vane, "but don't be unjust to Roderick. Don't fall out with him; remember, he—"

"Oh! I am not dreaming of falling out with him," replied Nella. "Well, I shall start at once then, aunt."

At half past two on Friday Mr. Howard and Jim Rogers left the offices of the former in Lincoln's Inn, and before long were closeted with Mr. Parker and his partner in Bedford-row, their opponents' men of business. The interview was a long one, and deeply interesting to both parties. Many letters were read, old papers and old documents gone through. More and more perplexed and troubled, hide it as he might, did the enemy's advocate become, as letter after letter was laid aside, and he listened attentively to Jim Rogers' clear and succinct account of certain events in his past life and experiences, and scarcely was the interview concluded, when the door of the lawyer's private room was somewhat hastily thrown open, and a lady appeared on the threshold.

"Mr. Parker—oh! I beg your pardon. I was told you were alone," cried a voice that thrilled through Jim's heart. "What! Mr. Rogers, you here!"

And Nella Danvers held out her hand to Jim with a happy smile.

"What, Miss Danvers, you have met—you know the gentleman—know who he is?" said Mr. Parker in breathless surprise.

"I know—yes, I have met Mr. Rogers frequently," she answered; "but—with sudden terror—what? What—what do you mean, Mr. Parker? who is—?"

"I mean that this gentleman, Mr. James Rogers, is the claimant to the Palliser estate—your estate, my dear young lady—about whom I spoke to you some weeks ago," he replied.

(To be continued)

It is interesting to hear that cremation is making decided, though necessarily slow, progress in England. So much prejudice exists against this method of disposing of the dead that it is astonishing to find that so marked an increase has taken place in so short a time.

### THE DARKSHAFT MINE.

—o—

Every one that knows anything about coal-mines knows that the great Darkshaft pit lies just on the edge of the town of Broadmere, and extends thence far under the sea.

In the summer of 18—two ladies came to Broadmere for the purpose of establishing their right to shares in this pit—a right which they had recently discovered. They were a mother and her daughter, both of them beautiful and cultured women, and as they had brought letters of introduction to the Rector they were soon recognised as belonging to one of the most desirable "sets" of that old aristocratic place.

Indeed, Grace Verner was a universal favourite, and before the first winter was over it was generally understood that she was the promised wife of the handsome Ernest Glen, a young man of very good family and of great promise. He was the head "Viewer" of the Darkshaft pit, and knew well the richness and excellence of its coal-seams. "Now, the Viewer of a large English coal-mine is a gentleman; a man of great courage, fore-thought and fine engineering skill. He has a large salary, lives in good style and good society, and exercises a great power, not only over the under-viewers, but also in the entire management of the pit.

The marriage had been fixed for June, and the preparations were all made. Mrs. Verner was so certain of her rights being settled by that date, that she had instructed her lawyer to make over a certain portion of them to her daughter as a wedding present. One evening Ernest was taking tea with them, and from the pleasant room laughter and happy voices went floating outward into the shady depths of the shrubbery.

Among this shrubbery a man was lurking—a man with dirty ragged clothing and a face passion smitten and every way evil; and whenever Mrs. Verner's voice or Grace's laugh caught his ear, its expression was almost terrible.

"I am nothing to them now!" he muttered. "But, we shall see! We shall see!"

He lingered in the thick shrubbery until the moon rose, and he saw Ernest wrap Grace in her little white hood and cloak, and take her into the garden. Then he crept nearer the house and watched Mrs. Verner light a candle and go upstairs into a room that fronted two ways, one of them towards a gable which was thickly matted with an old ivy vine. The windows were open on that side, and he cautiously ascended. When he reached the upper floor Mrs. Verner was sitting before an old-fashioned secretary, tying up some papers. He put his hand upon her shoulder, forced her to sit still, and uttered but one word,—

"Mary!"

She did not faint nor scream, nor even attempt to rise; but gathering rapidly together all her sense and energies, she looked the man earnestly in the face, and said, in a voice where tenderness and anger strove for the mastery,—

"Robert Verner!"

"Yes, madam. Lock your door and shut your windows. I have something to say to you."

"Not here, Robert! Not here, for Grace's sake!"

"Why not? Am I not your husband? Ah, ah! You can't get over that, you see!"

"Heaven help me! No."

She rose mechanically, locked the door, shut out the sweet evening air, pulled down the blinds, and then, motioning toward a sofa, sat down.

"Oh, no, my lady! I won't put you to that degradation. You are a lady, you know," and then in a lower voice. "And now I want you to give me those Darkshaft papers. I know all about them."

"Robert, you have robbed me of my own fortune, and of the peace and love of my youth. You have killed my father with the shame you brought on him. You have forced me to leave the place where my family have dwelt for centuries, and to come a stranger to this strange north country. Do have pity now on me and on your own child. For Heaven's sake, spare her the disgrace and misery of knowing you."

"You never told her, then?"

"No, no, no! She thinks you dead—and, oh, Robert! she is going to be married."

"I know that, too. Give me the papers. I have been long enough here."

"Robert! Robert! kill me, if you like, but do Grace no further wrong."

"I don't like to kill you, Mary. I like you well enough to wish to look at you occasionally. Give me the papers, or I shall ring the bell and order my supper. You know I'm master here, if I say so. See, I'll give you five minutes to decide. I don't want you to say I forced them from you."

In great emergencies the mind acts rapidly.

Mrs. Verner reviewed her whole position, and made her decision. She walked back to the secretary, and taking from a drawer a bundle of papers and a little gold chain holding a pearl cross and a couple of rings, came toward her husband.

"This is to be our last meeting, Robert, and you must promise it upon that chain and those rings; you know them—they were your mother's."

Robert put them aside nervously. If there was any memory that made his soul shiver and sob, it was that of the gentle little mother whose heart he had broken.

"I won't touch these things," he said, "give me the papers."

"Not unless you do what I say."

Robert saw his wife's courage rising, and he knew well that when timid women are angered to a point of resistance, such anger is not to be despised; so he said, sullenly,—

"I will do as you wish."

He took the papers, and immediately departed. He had another interview on hand that night. He waited until he saw Ernest enter his own handsome dwelling; then he scaled the great brick walls, and watched his further movements. He went, as Robert expected, to his office, looked over the reports of the under-viewers, and then lit a cigar and sat down to smoke. There was a low, open window, opening on a stone balcony, and when Ernest rose for something he wanted, Verner boldly entered the room, and was standing before his chair when he turned to it.

Ernest's first thought was: "There is something wrong at the pit," and he said, impatiently,—

"Now, my man, what's wrong?"

"I am not your man, Ernest Glen. I propose, indeed, to be your father-in-law."

Then Ernest knew that he had either to deal with a lunatic or a great sorrow, and he closed the window, and said,—

"Sit down, sir, and say what you have got to say."

Robert did not spare himself. He told all: How he had killed his mother with sorrow, and ruined his wife, forged his friend's name, and been forgiven, and then robbed a bank and been transported for fourteen years for it. He said he had come back to England eighteen months ago, but had only just found his wife. Didn't want to make trouble, "especially as Grace was going to marry so well, and thought Ernest had better give him some money and let him go to America."

Ernest heard all in silence; then taking out his purse, counted out twenty pounds.

"Will that pay you to hold your tongue?"

"Make it fifty."

The young man made it fifty, and said,—

"Now go. If you really go to America, you may write every year for the same; but don't annoy your wife and daughter. Let me stand between them and you."

The calm unselfishness and the air of authority which was partly natural to Ernest and partly acquired by the necessity of his position, quite cowed the wretched man. He slunk out into the darkness; and Glen thought out the new aspect of his position.

He must hurry forward his marriage. Grace was not to blame; but if his family knew, there would be no end of trouble. And these poor women! Surely they needed his protection, with this villain dogging their footsteps.

The next morning he received another heavy blow. Mrs. Verner told him that her secretary had been robbed of her Darkshaft papers and some jewellery, and that the police had been notified. He saw at once how the affair lay. He knew who was the thief, and he suspected that Mrs. Verner knew also. But he had determined not to blame her too much. He estimated the horror of her position, and boldly faced the disappointment that had fallen on all the glory of his love. But, at any rate, Grace was the same, and it was Grace he was going to marry. He made some excuse for hurrying forward matters, and in spite of the suggestions of his friends that the missing papers ought to be found first, he married Grace Verner early in June.

Perhaps no wife was ever happier. As the years went by, and lovely boys and girls began to patter about the halls and gardens of Holly Lawn, and as she herself grew in wifely grace, and in her husband's love, she acknowledged continually the blessing of her lot. Only one thing troubled her—her mother's health. Though in the prime of life, she was gradually sinking under a nervous complaint that defied medical skill. Ernest, who guessed the cause, tried often to win her confidence, but she repelled all his advances.

Thus more than five years passed away. One night, about the New Year, the Rector was sitting among his household, full of the joy and spirit of the time. Suddenly he was called away from them, and found waiting for him a lady in the wildest terror and distress, whom he easily recognised as Mrs. Verner.

"Oh, sir!" she cried; "there is no time for words—come with me instantly to Darkshaft pit! I will explain all as we go."

There is something so compelling in a great sorrow, that he cloaked himself silently and followed her into a waiting carriage. As it drove through the narrow, black streets, she told him the outlines of her sad story.

"And this villain, who has been torturing you to death for five years, is, you say—"

"Is my husband, and he is lying dying in the pit. A large mass of coal fell on him this afternoon, and he can't be moved. What could I do?" she cried, pitifully. "How could I tell Ernest and Grace of the horror of such a connection? Oh, my friend, some one must speak to him—some one must pray with him—and I must see the end of him, but I dare not go alone."

Indeed, even the Rector turned sick and giddy when he saw the road they must take. Darkshaft is close to the sea, absolutely in the shingle, and nearly nine hundred feet deep. The bankman expressed no surprise at such visitors, and, as they refused to change their clothing, gave them each a large overall, and putting them each into the huge basket, let them down. The night relays were coming up, and a basket of five men, their candles gleaming in the dark abyss, passed them on the way.

In a few minutes they touched the ground, and a craggy, dark, uneven descent led them to the interior of the pit. The path was high enough to allow them to follow their guide in an upright position. After going a hundred yards in a straight line under the sea, they came to a little opening, where the dying man lay. The space was narrow and hot, and dimly lit by a bit of candle stuck against the coal wall in a piece of clay; and there were some men yet at work about him.

He was almost dead, but his eyes gleamed gratefully upon the miserable, weeping wife,

who had at last braved all to come and close his eyes. And, incredible as it may seem, at this hour Mary Verner forgot all else but her early love for this wreck of humanity, and wiped the death damp from his brow with loving hands, and whispered words of forgiveness and tenderness.

Verner was gentle enough now. In those few hours of agony he learned more than all his wild life had taught him. Humble and penitent, he listened eagerly to the last prayer he was ever to hear, and then whispered,—

"Wife—wife, forgive me—don't tell Grace—the papers are in my breast."

What more he said was between God and his own soul, and Death gradually composed the once handsome face into such solemn curves and such sharp-cut lines as if they were to last forever.

At length poor Mary rose, and the Rector was about to lead her away, when one of the men who had been busy trying to the last to relieve the poor miner, stepped forward and said, gently,—

"Mother, I am here too."

Yes, it was Ernest Glen; he had been notified at once of the accident, and none had worked harder for the relief of the sufferer. But he went home with the rector and Mrs. Verner now, and the talk he had with her did for her what no physician could have done. She learnt now that Ernest had not only married Grace with a full knowledge of all, but that he had been bribing the man and watching continually his movements, in order to prevent his annoying his wife or her mother.

"It has been a dreadful watch," he said, wearily and solemnly; "but a little confidence on your part, mother, might have saved us both much suffering."

And for answer she put the Darkshaft papers in his hands, and said,—

"They are well yours. I never want to see them again, Ernest. You have been very good to me."

Those men were heroes who stormed the Malakoff and lit their cigars in the trenches before Vicksburg; but private life has heroes quite as great, and I think that Ernest Glen's five years' patience, prudence and unselfish burden-bearing may make him the brother-knight even of the peerless Bayard.

The Scottish people have some very interesting and occasionally mournful folk-lore and superstitions regarding birds and fowls. The song of the robin bodes ill to any sick person who hears it. A robin seen sitting upon a stone foretells the falling of snow. A black cock is highly prized, as its presence prevents the ravages of bogies and warlocks. To hear a cuckoo cry before breakfast is an ill omen. It is fortunate for a housewife if a brood of chickens all come off the nest cook-birds, as it is indicative of coming prosperity. The magpie is a particularly ominous bird to the Scotch.

One is sorrow; two mirth;  
Three, a wedding; four, a birth;  
Five, heaven; six, hell;  
Seven, the de'il's ain sel'!

The entrance of the thrush, any of the family of flocks, or the little ox eye tit into the open window or door of a house is an omen that anyone ill within will regain health, and, if all are in good health, that some pleasant good fortune is in store for the household. When the starling ceases to follow the grazing cattle some witch spell is being wrought upon them; and if the raven hover near cattle or sheep, "alt-shooting" is very likely to occur. When the robin will not sing in graveyard trees, the place is held in unusual dread; and if you will keep the white hair you will find under your foot when you hear the first notes of the cuckoo in the springtime, the next name you hear spoken is of the one you will happily wed.

USUALLY the greatest boastful workers are the smallest workers. The deep rivers pay a larger tribute to the sea than shallow brooks, and yet empty themselves with less noise.

The London telegraph office is the biggest in the world, over three thousand operators being employed, and upwards of thirty thousand batteries being used.

DARK brown and black hair come from France, Italy, Portugal, China, and Japan. From the two latter countries it is very coarse, and seldom used except when hair is in great demand. Yellow comes from Normandy and Holland, blonde almost entirely from Norway and Sweden, and golden, which, with white and grey hair, is the most expensive, from Germany.

It is said that many Russian ladies who claim to follow the minutiae of fashion have a "dummy" head in Paris, that is to say a model of their own cranium, upon which the coiffeur can work, as a phrenologist does upon his plaster-of-paris model. The head in Paris having been coiffed in the latest style, a photograph is sent to St. Petersburg, where the original head can approve or disapprove of the taste of the artist far away in Paris, who is arranging the hair for the customer, from whom it is separated by so many miles.

The pure white lustre of snow is due to the fact that all the elementary colours of light are blended together in the radiance that is thrown off from the surface of the crystal. It is quite possible to examine the individual snow crystals in such a way as to detect the several colours before they are mingled together to constitute the compound impression of whiteness upon the eye. The snow is then clothed with all the varied hues of the rainbow. The soft whiteness of the snow is also in some degree referable to the large quantity of air which is entangled amid the frozen particles. Snow is composed of a great number of minute crystals. More than a thousand distinct forms of snow crystals have been enumerated by the various observers. One hundred and fifty one were noticed during eight days in February and March, 1855, by Mr. Gladier, which were carefully drawn, engraved and printed in a paper attached to the report of the British Meteorological Society for that year. These minute crystals and prisms reflect all the compound rays of which white light consists. Sheets of snow on the ground are known to reflect beautiful pink and blue tints under certain angles of sunshine, and to fling back so much light as to be painful to the eyes by day, and to guide the traveller, in the absence of moonshine, by night.

During the nesting season the male ostrich seems to be anything but an agreeable creature, and may only be approached in safety with great precaution. He resents the intrusion of any visitors on his domain, and proves a most formidable opponent. His mode of attack is by a series of kicks. The leg is thrown forward and outward, until the foot, armed with a most formidable nail, is high in the air; it is then brought down with terrific force, serious enough to the unhappy human being or animal struck with the flat of the foot, but much worse if the victim be caught and ripped by the toe. Instances are known of men being killed outright by a single kick. If an unarmed man is attacked, he should never seek safety in flight; a few yards and the bird is within striking distance, and the worst consequences may result. The alternative is to lie flat on the ground and submit with as much resignation as possible to the inevitable and severe pummeling which it may be expected will be repeated at intervals until a means of escape presents itself, or the bird affords an opportunity of being caught by the neck, which, if tightly held and kept down, prevents much further mischief. Under such circumstances, an ostrich has been known, with a badly calculated kick, to strike the back of its head and scatter the brains.

## FACETIE.

ACCURATE, IF NOT ATTRACTIVE.—He: "Don't you think my photograph is a good likeness?" Sue: "Really, I am afraid it is."

WHEN a friend points out your faults he rouses your anger; when an enemy does the same thing he gains your respect.

"Is it really true that champagne will bleach people's hair?" "Well, rather. I've seen lots of people made light-headed by champagne."

He: "Your parents were prophetic. Miss Goodyear, when they christened you Charity." She: "Oh, no! It was because I began at home."

EVERY baby is the sweetest baby in the world. You were once considered the sweetest thing in the world, although you may not look it now."

AMONG the "hundred best books" the pocket book ranks first. If it is sufficiently robust there will be no difficulty in selecting the other ninety-nine.

In 80,000 years, it is said, the earth is to be incased in a solid mass of ice. There will then, at least, be no one to grumble about green Christmases.

WATCH the little things. Clean collars and shoes are mighty small items in a man's outfit; but their lack is enough to ruin all the effect of his other expenditure.

BOBBY: "Why did you whip me so hard, mamma?" Mamma: "To cure your bad temper." Bobby: "It's no good hitting me there—that's not where the temper is."

JUST AS THOUGH IT WERE CASE.—Hollow: "I have discovered another proof of the adage that time is money." Gofe: "Well?" Hollow: "We frequently spend the day."

WIFE: "You've been drinking again." Husband: "Can't help it, m' dear—make me happy, m' dear." "Huh! Makes you happy, eh? I'd like to know why?" "Be (sic) cause I sha two of you, m' dear."

MARIAN: "Why didn't you marry him?" Amy: "Shall I tell you?" Marian: "Do." Amy: "Can you keep a secret?" Marian: "I give my word." Amy: "Well, he never asked me to."

POLITE lady to two gentlemen who simultaneously rose to offer their car seats. "Thank you both!" And she filled the two seats well enough to look quite comfortable.

YOUNG ARTIST: "Don't you think those are lovely flesh tints I have managed to get into that picture?" Critic: "I do, indeed. Isn't it a pity we can't have such tints in nature?"

"I looks like a tramp, ma'am," he said; "but I ain't. I'm a sailor, ma'am. I was wrecked and washed ashore." "You ain't been washed since, I'll wager," said the unsympathetic woman.

SHE: "Oh, yes, I quite believe there's a fool in every family. Don't you?" He: "Well—er—my opinion's rather blessed. You see, I'm the only member of our family."

"I HAD to be away from school yesterday," said Tommy. "You must bring an excuse," said the teacher, "Who from?" "Your father." "He ain't no good at making excuses; ma catches him every time."

JOHNNY: "Mamma, can't you tell me a new fairy story?" Mrs. Braggi: "I don't know any new ones, Johnny. Maybe your father will tell me some when he comes in to-night."

OLD HENPEEK: "Nonsense! the idea of talking about marriage! You and my daughter haven't been engaged over six months." Young Man: "Do you believe in long engagements, sir?" Old Henpeek: "Certainly, my young friend, certainly. The longer the engagement the shorter the marriage."

"You young scoundrel," said the father, seizing his disobedient son by the neck, "I'll show you how you ought to treat your mother!" And he gave him several bangs on the ears, and then shook him till his hair began to fall out.

POLICEMAN: "Why did your husband kill that young man?" Mrs. Peanutti: "He make love too much." Policeman: "What did he say?" Mrs. Peanutti: "He say that a cookstove and two beds too heavy for me to carry."

An old bachelor said: "There's more jewellery worn nowadays than when I was young: but there's one piece that I always admired which I seldom see now." "What is that?" asked a young lady. "A silver thimble" was the reply. He was regarded with contempt and scorn by every lady in the room for the rest of the evening.

CAPTAIN'S wife (to her husband): Arthur, love, I want you to give Jack a good dressing down to-morrow morning." Captain: "What for? I am perfectly satisfied with the fellow." She: "Well, you know he has got to beat the carpets to-morrow, and he strikes ever so much harder when he is in a bad temper."

In a farce recently produced in Paris the modern method of duelling is satirized. Eight men take part in the play. Two of them are going to fight a duel, and each is to have three shots. The shots are fired, and everybody is killed except the two principals, who shake hands and drive away with satisfied honour.

"WHAT'S the matter, Gus?" asked Willie Washington. "I've discovered that I'm no exception to the rule," said Gus de Jay, disconsolately. "I've got a skeleton in my closet, don't you know?" "Maybe not," was the comforting rejoinder. "Go back and take somehow look, dear boy; paps it was youah twousahs-stwetcher you saw."

Two persons standing in a certain church-yard were disputing as to where the churchyard ought to have been made. One said that it ought not to have been made there, the other disagreed with him. "Well," said the former, "I shall never be buried here as long as I live." "Ah, but I shall if I'm spared," replied the other.

Pretty Girl: "Do you think it would be immodest for a woman to propose during leap-year?" Old Bachelor (furiously): "No, indeed; no, indeed, I think it would be eminently sensible." Pretty Girl: "That's just what I told old Mrs. Sourface, who admires you so much; but she said you'd be shocked. I'll run and tell her."

THAT was a delightfully shrewd answer of the good wife of Professor Robson, who disliked the cant expressions of the religious tongue of that day. She had invited a gentleman to dinner, and he had accepted with the reservation, "if I am spared." "Weel, weel," said Mrs. Robson, "if ye're dead, I'll na' expect ye."

AMATEUR SOPRANO: "It's just too mean for anything! That dog of yours howls every time I sing." Neighbour: "I'm very sorry, mum." "Why don't you stop him?" "You see, mum, we didn't know it was that way." "What way?" "We thought, mum, that you was tryin' to spite us by singin' every time he howled."

WHEN Lord Thurlow first opened a lawyer's office in London he took a basement-room which had previously been occupied by a cobbler. He was somewhat annoyed by the previous occupant's callers and irritated by the fact that he had few of his own. One day an Irishman entered. "The cobbler's gone, I see," he said. "I should think he had," tarily responded the lawyer. "And what do ye sell?" inquired the Irishman, looking at a solitary table and a few law-books. "Bloodyheads," responded Thurlow. "Begorra," said Pat, "ya must be doing a mighty fine business—ye ain't got but one left."

LODGER: "I found something in my bed-room last night, madam, and—" Lodging-house keeper (indignantly): "There aint such a thing in the house! You must have brought it with you!" Lodger (coolly): "I was going to say, madam, that I found a sovereign in my bed-room last night, and I won't dispute your word as to my having brought it with me; so I'll keep it."

MR. SLIPTONGUE: "I have not met your wife. Is she here this evening?" Mr. Hansome: "Yea, but just at this moment she is engaged—over there at the piano." Mr. Sliptongue, with affected enthusiasm: "Ah, I see. She is that goddess-like beauty who is playing an accompaniment for the mountain of flesh who is singing." Mr. Hansome (stiffly) "My wife does not play. She sings."

"WALK up, ladies and gentlemen," said the proprietor of a menagerie, "and see our famous lion, Mustapha. He is as sensible as any human being. A French sergeant once pulled out of his foot a thorn on which he had stepped. What do you think the noble creature did? It devoured, one by one, in order of rank, all the superior officers of our sergeant, until the latter found himself promoted to the grade of colonel. Walk in, gentlemen; only a penny!"

"Pat, I'm in a koind ov a dil'emmey, an' civil a wan ov me knows phwat to do. Yez must know that I haven't been home since yesterdat mor'nin', and me wif is layin' for me, I know. Phat woud yez do if yez wuz me? If I go go home I'll get clubbed, an' If I don't go home I'll get clubbed." "Phat woud I do? Why, I'd go home an' take my cubbin' from my ould woman loike a man. Don't lose a wife's rispost, whatever yez do!" The next drink is taken in silence.

MRS. VASHERY: "Well! how does this happen?" Mudge: "How does waitappen?" "This state of intoxication you are in." "All your fault. All your fault. Didn't you (to) tell me t' take hot-hot w'isky for mike—my cold?" "But I told you to take one." "Jusso. You take—told me t' take one. Billings tolle me t' take one: feller, I forgot his name, he tolle me t' take one, an' eleven other fellers tolle me t' take one. Got four more comin' fore I'm through. See?"

IT is always better to be sure that your little theories will not be offensive, as in the instance of the two men who were discussing what they pleased to call cranks. Both agreed that the notions of cranks were ridiculous. "There is the sunspot man," said one. "What an absurd theory!" "Excuse me, I don't think so," said the other, evidently offended. "Why not?" asked the first. "Because, sir, I am the sunspot man," was the frigid answer.

ROMANTIC MISS: "Do you really love me well enough to do battle for me?" Ardent Suitor: "Ay, against a thousand." "Well, Mr. Bigfish is paying me a good deal of attention. Would you fight him for me?" "Yes, I would." "And could you defeat him?" "No; he'd probably thrash the life out of me." "Mercy! Well, never mind. I'll take you without any fighting; and oh, please do remember, my darling, promise me on your honour, that if ever you meet Mr. Bigfish coming, you'll run."

He was a Diplomat: "Will you be mine?" "Can you afford to dress me well if I marry you?" "That depends upon what you consider being dressed well. If you mean Worth dresses from Paris, I cannot afford them; nor do you need them." "I don't?" "No. Your beauty needs no adornment, and it will always eclipse any dress you wear, no matter how fine or how expensive it may be. No one that looks at you sees your dress. The beauty of face and perfection of figure only are noted. All finery sinks into insignificance beside them. What satin is there to your skin? What silk like your hair? What colours to compare with your lips, cheeks and eyes?" "Jewl, I am yours."

## SOCIETY.

QUEEN MARGUERITE of Italy claims to have the sandals worn by the Emperor Nero.

NEVER, perhaps, was London so dull as at present, and all gaieties on this side of Easter are to be strictly tabooed.

The eldest son of Emperor William has inherited his father's talkativeness. He makes military addresses to his little brothers at table. He is not yet ten years old.

No members of the Royal Family are to attend Ascot races this year, and the Queen has already given orders that the Royal stand is to be kept closed, with all the blinds drawn down during the meeting.

In making calls it is now the custom "over the water" to wear a long cloak, which is dropped in the reception-room, and the drawing-room is entered in a pretty visiting costume without wrap of any sort.

The Prince of Wales, not from any sudden access of Primitivism, but simply out of consideration for his health, will not in future be frequently seen upon the racecourse. No stress of evil weather has daunted His Royal Highness hitherto, but for the future it is probable he will run no such risks as he has in the past.

SPANISH Court etiquette is a fearful and wonderful thing. It allows certain of the grandees to put on their hats in the presence of their Sovereign, while it forbids anyone to touch the person of the Sovereign under all sorts of penalties, and in consequence there is a good deal of difficulty about chastising the present Monarch when he shall deserve it.

PRINCE GEORGE is quickly, and very properly, assuming the new position forced upon him by the recent sad events in the Royal Family, and when the duties entailed by their exalted position compel the Prince and Princess of Wales and their family to resume their place at the head of society it will be found that Prince George will come to the front in the most conspicuous way.

It is hoped that Princess May, Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Teck, and the Duke of Teck will all derive much benefit from their stay at Cannes, and later at Mentone, at the guests of George, Lady Wolverton. Princess May has grown very thin, and looks very white and tired, and both the Duke and Duchess of Teck show signs of their recent trial. In such sad cases only change of scene and time can bring relief.

The Prince and Princess of Wales have been much benefited in health by their stay at Eastbourne. After a visit to the Queen at Windsor Castle the Prince and Princess and their family will proceed to the Riviera, and they are likely to be absent for several months. It is understood that the Prince and Princess will ultimately go to Copenhagen for the celebration of the golden wedding of the King and Queen of Denmark on the 20th May, at which there are to be no festivities, but merely a family gathering, including also the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and the King and Queen of the Hellenes.

The lamented Duke of Clarence was a sculptor, or it would rather seem, a designer, of no small ability. The young Prince seems to have concealed his accomplishment from the general knowledge with the quiet modesty that characterised him in all things; but it is not so strange that he should have shared the artistic faculty which is so strongly marked in many members of our Royal Family. The Queen herself, it is generally known, possesses very considerable talent as a painter, a gift that is largely shared by her daughters the Empress Frederick, Princess Louise, and Princess Beatrice, the second of whom is also known to art-lovers as an accomplished wielder of the sculptor's chisel.

## STATISTICS.

The first steel pens cost the manufacturer 5s. apiece.

SEVEN miles is the range of some of our big cannon.

GOLD plate to the value of £2,000,000 is often displayed at State dinners in Windsor Castle.

FROM recent investigations it has been found that the average speed of the transmission of earthquake shock is very nearly 16,000 feet per second.

THE greatest sailing vessel of Germany has been launched at Gretemund. It is built of steel entirely, 338 feet long, 45½ feet wide, 28½ feet deep. It is of 4,500 tons burden.

## GEMS.

To persevere in one's duty and be silent is the best answer to calumny.

A JUDICIOUS silence is always better than truth spoken without charity.

OUR grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.

If you would increase your happiness and prolong life forget your neighbours' faults. Forget slander, the temptations, the fault-finding, and give little thought to the cause which provoked it. Forget the peculiarities of your friends, and remember only their good points. Forget all personal quarrels. Blot out, so far as you possibly can, all the disagreeable things of life.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

For simple hoarseness, take a fresh egg, beat it, and thicken with pulverised sugar. Eat freely of it, and the hoarseness will soon be relieved.

GINGER CAKES.—To two pounds of flour add three quarters of a pound of good moist sugar, and one ounce of best Jamaica ginger well mixed in the flour. Have ready three quarters of a pound of lard melted, and four eggs well beaten; mix the lard and eggs together, and stir it into the flour, which will form a paste; roll out in thin cakes, and bake in a moderately heated oven.

BRANDY SNAPS.—Quarter of a pound of golden syrup, one ounce of butter, one ounce of flour, half teaspoon spice, quarter of a teaspoon ground ginger. Melt the syrup and butter together, and pour it among the flour and spices, and mix thoroughly. Put it on a greased oven shelf in small teaspoonfuls—a good bit apart, and bake till brown. Take out and allow to stand a few minutes. Then take off the wafers and roll them round a greased piece of wood or the handle of a spoon. This must be done very quickly.

SEED CAKE.—Half a pound of flour, quarter of a pound of peel, quarter of a pound of butter, three eggs, six ounces of sugar, quarter of a pound of sultanas, two ounces almonds, half teaspoonful baking powder, one tablespoonful milk. Put butter and sugar in a basin, and beat them together with a spoon till they are white, then add yolks of eggs, and mix them in; then milk, and mix it; then put in the flour, and stir it well through the rest; then the baking powder and all the fruit. Put the whites of eggs on a plate and beat them up, and add them last. Pour it into a papered cake tin, and put it into the oven till it is ready. The almonds are skinned and split up, the raisins washed and dried, and the peel cut up in thin stripes. If it is really a seed cake you want, then leave out all the fruit, and put half an ounce of caraway seeds instead.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Tower is the oldest building in London.

TEN days a year is the average amount of sickness in human life, statistics say.

INDIAN fakirs are able to impersonate death as long as six and even ten months.

THE design round a shilling is on one half a laurel branch, and on the other an oak branch.

THE Arabs think infinitely more of the pedigree of their horses than of those of their own families.

CIGAR ashes are used for medicinal purposes, and are especially efficacious in scarlatina.

SEE that the lamp wicks are turned down after trimming, else the lamps will be covered with oil.

TO add to the horrors of the famine in Russia small-pox is raging violently in some districts. In one large village alone four hundred children have died in ten days.

A FRENCH physician claims to have discovered a preparation of gold which, injected subcutaneously, will prevent any trouble from poisonous snake bites.

Lord and Lady Brassey have a typewriting machine on board the *Sunbeam*, and send home lively chronicles of their present cruise by every mail.

IT is suggested that the reason for the gradual giving up of the good old custom of toasting "beautiful women" at dinners is due to the fact that they are no longer rare.

THE medical adviser of a large London life insurance company declares that the loss from epidemic influenza is two and a half times greater than that occasioned by the cholera of 1842.

THE physical culture craze has put an end to the reign of the languid belle. Women go in for all sorts of outdoor sports, and just now walking is the fad. The heroine of the hour is the woman who has walked the greatest number of miles a day.

ROBERT BURNS is in a fair way to be honoured with a statue in Philadelphia. Scotchmen in that city have taken the scheme in hand; and at the meeting held to observe his birthday anniversary special efforts were made to excite interest in the idea.

THE costliest dresses in the world are worn by the women of Sumatra. They are made of pure gold and silver. After the metal is mined and smelted it is formed into fine wire, which is woven into cloth, and afterwards made into dresses.

THE Bushmen and Brazilian Wood Indians cannot count beyond two. The Butoendous of Central Africa have a word for "one," but anything beyond is "many." Among the natives of Ellice's Islands, the word for "ten" means "all," that is, all the fingers.

SOME of the wooden churches of Norway are fully seven hundred years old, and are still in an excellent state of preservation. Their timbers have successfully resisted the frost and almost Arctic winters, because they have been repeatedly coated with tar. Norway pine, thus treated, seems to best resist decay.

IN India it is quite common to shave a man while he is asleep, and if he happens to be lying on his back he can have his beard entirely removed without being disturbed. The native barber has a wonderfully light hand, and is an adept at shaving without causing a fraction of pain. Europeans and Americans travelling in India soon fall into the indolent habits which prevail, one of which is to be shaved in bed before rising and bathing. It is not considered fashionable to visit a barber's shop, the moneyed classes being almost always shaved at home and almost as frequently while in bed.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MAY.—The 1st of May, 1870, fall on a Sunday.

SUSANNE.—Oswestry is in Shropshire.

T. R. H.—Whoever the mother willed the money to would get it.

J. C. S.—The next thing he can do is to take out a judgment summons in the county court.

SIR HENRY LEWIS.—If the gentleman is a naturalised Englishman the marriage would be perfectly legal.

OLD SAILOR.—The best way will be to apply to the officials of the hospital.

TAKE O' SHANTER.—The dog-tax was 12s. per dog down to 1886.

INVENTOR.—Mr. Edison was born at Milan, Ohio, United States, in 1847.

THIRYANDER.—The Battle of Waterloo was fought on the 18th June, 1815.

PRINCE CHARLIE.—Burns was the author of the well-known song, "Auld Lang Syne."

R. O. W.—In 1883 the race for the Derby was run on Wednesday, May 23.

HOPE.—Sir William Harcourt has never been Chief Secretary for Ireland.

LONELY LOTTIE.—The First Battalion (72nd) Seaforth Highlanders are at Ferney, in Ireland.

SISTER ANNE.—Gifts made in view of marriage are recoverable if the engagement is broken off.

WILLIE.—Write to Government Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, S.W.

T. N.—Twelve years' undisputed possession now gives a title to property.

ONE IN MISERY.—A married woman's separate property is protected from seizure for her husband's debts.

WILL OF THE WISE.—The way into the Coastguard is through the navy, and you are now too old for that.

A. M. P.—A promissory note should specify when the money is to be paid, and at that date it is recoverable.

DOR.—We would rather not express an opinion on the matter.

Mrs. C. P.—It is simply a matter of opinion. There are many more than five that could be called leading men.

A SOLDIER'S DARLING.—The Second Battalion Royal Scots are at Peshawar, Bengal. No word of their return meantime.

GORDON.—The Panama Canal works had cost £60,000,000 in 1883. The works have now been suspended.

BARRADA.—Engagement ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand, and kept there until it is replaced by the marriage ring.

DIFFICULTIES.—The husband would not be personally responsible; but the woman does not cancel her debts by marrying.

IGNORANT.—There is not a town called Tasmania, but there is a colony with that name, after its discoverer, Abel Tasman.

A YOUNG COUPLE.—You may keep fowls, but must not create a nuisance, nor allow the fowls to trespass on your neighbour's property.

ANXIOUS.—Canada is no place for a man in week health. By all means let your friend aim rather at reaching California, going perhaps direct to San Diego.

A REGULAR READER.—The Sovereign may dissolve Parliament at any time; but a constitutional Sovereign acts only on advice of Ministers for the time being.

THRIFT.—We think your money is safe enough, but it may be a twelvemonth before you get it. Of course interest runs in the meantime.

INQUIRER.—The Manjir disaster occurred on 27th July, 1880, when a British force under General Burrows was defeated by Ayoub Khan, the Afghan pretender.

MONA.—You must, of course, forfeit a month's wages in lieu of notice, but your sister can claim for the fortnight's work she did.

A COUNTRY GIRL.—We know the game very well. It is very easily learnt. You had best ask somebody who plays it just to put you in the way. You would find this much easier and quicker.

MAUD.—You have done quite right. You should have nothing more to do with the young man. You are evidently well rid of him. Anyone who could behave as he has is not worth a thought.

SOPHIA.—If you send a stamped directed envelope, with your question, to the Registrar, and write "Will" on the envelope, you will get all the information you require.

THICKHEAD.—The Septennial Act limits the duration of any one Parliament to seven years, at the most, but within that limit there may be a dissolution at any time.

A WELL WISHER.—Princess May would have been Queen Consort during her husband's lifetime, and Queen Dowager when he died and his child was crowned. She would not have reigned as Queen.

KNAVE OF CLUBS.—After the apprentice is twenty-one the master has no further control. Disputes between an apprentice and a master may be settled by summons before a magistrate.

DOLLY.—It may arise from many causes, and we are totally uninformed as to symptoms, age, etc. The safest plan by far would be to consult a medical man.

MEG.—Turpentine, paraffin, or benzine will remove paint stains from black cloth. Better try benzine first; sponge with clean water afterwards. Just rub the stain with a rag dipped in the benzine.

T. S. F.—The meaning of the verse is not very obscure, we think, and not very refined either. Burns, like Shakespeare, is occasionally just too objectively pointed and plain for moderate tastes.

CURIOSITY.—The population of "Registration London" is 4,111,056; of "Administrative County of London," 4,231,451; and of "City of London within municipal and Parliamentary limits," 37,694.

TOMMY TUCKER.—Should not think any special value would attach to a George III. coin. Until quite recently the gold coinage of that reign was legal tender. Sovereigns and half-sovereigns are by no means scarce.

TEMPTED.—Your resolution to stick to your clericaly is a good one. A boy who is governed by an overpowering desire to help his widowed mother is pretty sure to come out right.

PICKLED FATHER.—We should say bakers would be healthier if their hours were within reason and their places of business properly ventilated; meantime, as they stand, we should count baking one of the most unhealthy trades going.

RATHER EMBARRASSED.—You were guilty of rudeness to the two ladies in sending them your card without having first been introduced to them, and need not therefore wonder at the cutting reception they give you in the street.

## MANY THOUGHTS I GIVE THEE.

How many thoughts I give thee!  
Come hither on the grass.

And if thou'lt count, unfailing,

The green blades as we pass,

Or the leaves that sigh and tremble

To the sweet wind of the west,

Or the rippling of the river,

Or the sun's beams on its breast,

I'll count the thought's I give thee,

My beautiful, my best!

How many joys I owe thee!

Come, sit where seas run high,

And count the heaving billows

That break on the shores and die,

Or the grains of sand they fondle,

When the storms are overblown,

Or the pearls in the deep sea caverns,

Or the stars in the milky z. n.,

And I'll count the joys I owe thee,

My beautiful, my own!

And how much love I profess!

Come, scoop the ocean dry,

Or weigh in thy tiny balance

The star-ships of the sky;

Or twine around thy fingers

The sunlight streaming wide,

Or fold it in thy bosom

While the world is dark beside!

And I'll tell how much I love thee,

My beautiful, my bride!

G. K. S.

NICE GIRL, RATHER.—J. A. from the Hebrew, means God's grace. The rest of your letter is unintelligible; but as far as we can make out, the subject seems to be quite of a private nature, and cannot be settled by anyone but yourself. The question of age is a matter of opinion.

CLEVEDON.—It is not necessary that five-o'clock tea-cups be used at an afternoon tea. Indeed, uniformity in the style of the cups used is not desirable. At some of the most fashionable tea artistic collections of cups, each from some noted manufacturer and selected for their beauty, were used.

VIXEN.—You seldom see a stupid person with grey eyes; the genuine grey is always found among highly intellectual people. Steel-grey eyes with large pupils denote intense feeling; blue-grey eyes are generally possessed by people with kindly hearts. You never find a mean spirit behind a pair of blue-grey eyes.

TAOUNES, M. HILDA.—If you will refer to the Prayer Book you will find the dates of every Ash Wednesday through a long term of years. Shrove Tuesday is, of course, one day earlier. You will find that Ash Wednesday fell on March 1 in 1881 and in 1870, and you had better set the date in earlier years.

GUY.—All the world will be at Chicago, but those experienced in the city's ways will have the first call for situations going there; then the engagement at last is a short one, and there will be an ugly scattering when the Exhibition closes at the beginning of winter, with no jobs to be got anywhere. No, we think you had better stay at home.

A SAD CASE.—Of course you should not marry a man who is in the habit of getting intoxicated. Nothing but misery could come of your being a drunkard's wife, no matter how good-natured and jolly he may be. A "jolly dog's" wife usually lives in a kennel, and his children are liable to be street urchins.

A VOTER.—The ballot is absolutely and impudently secret. The number on the voting-paper is merely its consecutive number or page in the book from which it is torn. It does not show the voter's number on the roll at all, so that even though the whole of the ballot-papers were blown to the winds and collected by the outside public there would be no means of identifying how anyone had voted by them.

INNOCENCE.—To shanghai a man is to get him drunk or stupefy him with drugged liquor and then carry him on board a ship which is just about to sail. When the sailor who has been thus entrapped awakes, he finds himself so far out to sea that escape is hopeless, and so has to submit to the situation and go to work as one of the crew.

NANCY.—

"Be the day short or never so long."

At length it ringeth to even-song."

These words are given by Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs* (ch. vii.) as being quoted at the stake by George Tankerville (1555). They are a variation of similar words in Haywood's *Proverbs*. "Be the day never so long; evermore at last they ring to even-song."

S. T.—Thomas Haemmerlein was born at Kempen, near Cologne, about 1380, and died in 1471. He was a monk from an early age, and dwelt all his life in the Monastery of St. Agnes, near Swalley, in the Netherlands, calling himself Thomas of Kempen or a Kempe. He is the reputed author of the celebrated *Initiation of Christ*, a manual of Christian devotion, bearing his name, which has been translated into nearly all languages.

INQUISITIVE.—Maria Taglioni, once a famous ballet dancer, recently died at her home in Bohemia at the age of eighty-eight. She began to dance when a child, and after fifteen years on the stage, married a count and retired from public life. During the Franco-Prussian war she lost all her money, and her husband having died, she was forced to teach dancing and deportment in London, and so supported herself until recently.

KITCHEN FAT.—Your questions, for the most part, are what no one can answer so well as yourself. Only those who know the corporal and yourself could decide whether the marriage would be a wise one or not. Twenty-three is not too young to marry. It is quite a matter of opinion. We think six years is too long for an engagement, but, of course, circumstances alter cases. 4 Robert, from the *Grimaldi*, means famous in counsel. 6 It must depend entirely on your means.

R. D.—A remarkable invention is said to have been patented by a Japanese gentleman. It is a little instrument which enables the possessor to send "a cloud of blinding dust" into the eye of a foe at a distance of twelve feet. It is said that the poor "foe" is thereby absolutely deprived of sight, and therefore, of course, at the mercy of his assailant". The claims of humanity, however, are not entirely overlooked, for it is stated that the blindness only lasts for about twenty minutes, after which the sufferer's eyesight is as good as ever.

ANTIQUE.—A correspondent who recently asked, Which is the oldest church in England? may be referred to Canon Bunting, who, in his "History of St. Martin's, Canterbury," claims the distinction for that venerable edifice. He describes it as being the only existing church originally built as a church during the first four centuries that has remained a church till the present day. St. Martin's has a rival in St. Mary-in-the-Castle, Dover, which Canon Puckle believes to have been erected in the fourth century; but in the days of Queen Anne, and for a century and a half afterwards, this edifice was used as a garrison fuel depot.

JUPITER.—The tree from which strychnine comes is called the *strychnos nux vomica*. It grows in Ceylon, and in several districts of India, is of moderate size, with thick and shining leaves and a short, crooked stem. In the fruit season it is readily recognised by its rich orange-coloured berries, about as large as golden pippins—the favourite food of many kinds of birds—within which are the flat, round seeds, not an inch in diameter, ash-grey in colour, and covered with very minute silvery hairs. The Germans fancy that they can discover a resemblance in them to crows' eyes, but the likeness is purely imaginary. The seed is the deadly poison not. It was early used as a medicine by the Hindoos, and its nature and properties were understood by Oriental doctors long before it was known to foreign nations.

A PUZZLE.—It is strange that slight things will confuse the mind and lead it astray. You say that there is a hot dispute among your friends as to whether there is any difference between six dozen dozen and half a dozen dozen. That question has puzzled weak heads ever since we can remember, and it will probably continue to puzzle them to the end of time. In order to comprehend it, suppose you ask yourself if there is any difference between six dozen and a half dozen. You will probably be able to discover that six dozen equals seventy-two, whereas half a dozen equals only six; and that, therefore, the question really amounts to this, to wit: Is there any difference between seventy-two and six dozen?

It is to be hoped that your friends, and the inhabitants of Natick generally, will be able to see that seventy-two dozen is sixty-six dozen more than six dozen.

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